



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

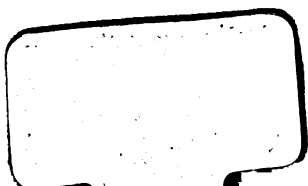
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

38.

512.



NATIONAL RELIGION.

NATIONAL RELIGION :

OR,

THE VOICE OF GOD

TO

THE BRITISH CHURCH AND NATION.

BY

THE REV. R. SHITTLER

CURATE OF MELCOMBE HORSEY,
NEAR BLANDFORD, DORSET.



"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."—2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish."—Isa. lx. 12.

"Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!"—Isa. xlviii. 18.

L O N D O N :

FRANCIS BAISLER, 124, OXFORD STREET;

JAMES NISBET & Co., BERNERS STREET.

FRASER & Co., EDINBURGH.

1838.

512.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE subject of the foregoing page is intended to be developed in a series of discourses on the interesting conditions of man in his personal, relative, and associated existence. In the prosecution of this design the doctrines enforced will be found such as are based upon the character, and agreeable to the perfections, of the moral Governor of the world, and connected with the responsible relations of the intelligent work of his hands, the object of his bounty, and the subject of his regard, as exhibited in the sacred volume. The whole is proposed as a feeble and humble attempt to aid the furtherance of man's present and eternal happiness, and promote the honour and glory of the supreme Lord of all, in accordance with the title which designates the entire undertaking.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

P R E F A C E.

IN presenting this volume to the public,—the first, and the foundation, of a series on the same subject which, in due time, by the mercy of God, may successively appear,—it is deemed requisite to state at the outset the views with which the Author has been induced to undertake it, and the principles on which it will be carried into execution.

That the holy scriptures are of no “private interpretation,” we have the authority of divine inspiration itself for asserting. They afford, indeed, an unerring rule of private life; and if they be not faithfully received and attended to as such, it is not to be expected that they will be conscientiously adopted and followed as a

sure guide for public conduct. For how may any one enforce that in his open character, the claims of which are disregarded in his own bosom, or not acknowledged in his relative intercourse with his fellow-men? Nevertheless, we cannot doubt but that their great object is, next to salvation, to teach men to live in orderly regulation in the social compact, as individuals, families, communities, and nations, in the fear of God and hope of salvation; aiming, above all things, at the promotion of the divine glory, by securing their own happiness in time and to eternity. God's ancient church—the nation of Israel—were his peculiar inheritance, and our example and monitor. To them, throughout a long succession of ages, he committed the sacred oracles of his revealed will, and thereby laid them under the positive obligation of obedience to his laws; and their interesting and affecting history, in all its variety and detail, from the origin to the cessation of their national and ecclesiastical polity, loudly speaking to all the world, proves to us the reasonableness, equity, and necessity, of such a wise, holy, and bene-

ficent requisition. Through them we are instructed (nor have we the option of making a different choice) that obedience to the divine will is not only our bounden duty, but also our highest honour and greatest advantage, and the grand foundation of all personal comfort and national blessings.

The Author conceives that every distinct nation or associated community to which the sacred oracles have been vouchsafed, is, *at least*, under as strong obligations for obedience to the divine precepts in all their enlarged dimensions, under the gospel dispensation, as the Israelites were in their peculiar circumstances as the special and avowed people of God; and that in every case in which these motives and demands are not seen, confessed, and acted upon, in the common course of life, in the policy and government of such communities, as well as in all the private capacities of individual station and social demeanour, everything must of necessity be out of order; turbulence and confusion will prevail; and the blast of the divine displeasure will, sooner or later,

wither the fondest hopes, and cause the most vigorous efforts to end in keen and bitter disappointment.

Viewing the subject in this light, there is no difficulty in coming to the conclusion, that the various responsible relations of *this* nation are of the highest order, seeing that God hath not dealt so with any other people under heaven, at least in the modern date of the world ; our mercies being so great, our privileges so many, and our position so conspicuously elevated, by the special favour and unmerited goodness of the Lord, that no one can hesitate in saying, "This hath God done," for we cannot but "perceive that it is his work."

Still, however, notwithstanding the high honour and great advantages which God in his infinite wisdom and holy providence hath been pleased to bestow upon us, it is much to be lamented that we are so far removed from him in principle, in spirit, and in practice ; in love for his truth, in reverence for his name, and zeal for his glory. The author especially alludes to our present perilous condition in the complex order of our

combined existence ; being fully assured that in all scriptural example, in God's dealings with men in the moral government of the world, and especially with those portions of the human family which are entrusted with his revealed truth and will in the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, the heads or rulers of churches and nations are held responsible before him for their public and representative character and conduct.

With these views, based as they evidently are upon the truth of the living God, the Author has been led, in the order of Providence, and at the instance of one who has long felt the liveliest anxiety on the subject,—who, in the kindest and most handsome manner, has voluntarily undertaken the whole charge of the work, and whose disinterested zeal, it is hoped, will be duly appreciated by a liberal and enlightened public,—at the present critical juncture, (though with time and abilities far inadequate for the task,) to enter upon the series before alluded to, with the simple object, should the Lord be pleased to favour the undertaking, of raising the tone of responsible feeling and action among all orders

of the realm, from the cottage up to the throne ; by exhibiting the true foundation of all moral sympathies and dependent relations ; by enforcing the great duties of men, from the highest to the lowest, in public and private station, amidst all their personal and social conditions, and throughout the whole gradation of their official or ruling capacities ; and thereby promoting the national advantage, in the steady enforcement of the high scriptural motto, " FEAR GOD, HONOUR THE KING ; " * whose twofold, but united statement, like the front pillars of the porch of the temple, in the significant meaning of their separate names,—*Jachin* and *Boaz*, †—constitutes the solidity and strength of every national association of the human kind bearing the high and exalted name of Christ.

The truths necessary to be inculcated for the attainment of this issue are of no common origin or inferior character. We must apply to the source of all true wisdom if we would allay our

* 1 Peter, ii. 17.

† See 1 Kings, vii. 21, and 2 Chron. iii. 17. See the marginal reading.

thirst or be refreshed by its salutary streams. God's word must be the guide of all our ways, as well as the foundation of all our hopes. Whatever springs not from that fountain, and rests not upon that basis, is utterly unable to sustain the destinies of responsible and immortal beings ; and this must embrace both the provisions it contains for the government of nations and the promises and directions it affords for the benefit and salvation of men. The relative connexion between God and his intelligent creatures in all the actual or possible conditions in which they may be found, must occupy a prominent position in such a work. The great scriptural doctrines of God's supreme dominion and unlimited authority, and man's entire dependence and universal responsibility, including his fall, corruption, guilt, and danger, and especially his interesting character and circumstances as we view him under the Christian dispensation in the gospel of Jesus Christ, will not only afford a firm rock for erecting the solid structure of true individual piety, but will always yield a sure test by which we may ascertain the healthy

or vitiated pulsation of the social constitution, and evince the striking aspect and bearings which vital religion will invariably hold on our national as well as individual prosperity ; or the reverse, as the case may be, should its dictates be unheeded and its claims disregarded. And in a protestant land, as ours is, considering the perils from which we have been delivered and the dangers to which we are still exposed, every truth thus enforced speaks with a voice, and tells with an application, more powerful in its nature and urgent in its demands than in any other respect whatsoever.

In the prosecution of this design many an alarming, as well as important and encouraging truth, must be told ; and there will be as much need of prayer for grace, on the part of the Author, that he may be enabled, with love and tenderness, faithfully to deliver, as on the side of his readers humbly and cheerfully to receive, the message which the very nature of his office and work will constrain him to enforce. A teachable frame of mind, which the Spirit of God alone may effectually impart, is indispensably

requisite for a profitable improvement of any doctrine, privilege, or duty; whilst to resist the force and conviction of divine truth, can only tend to harden the heart, provoke the Almighty, add to our sin, and increase our danger. Submission to the divine will, and earnest craving for the divine mercy, are the proper dispositions of guilty men; of the mightiest as well as the meanest; the occupant of the throne as well as the inhabitant of the cottage. May such a spirit be largely poured forth upon the inhabitants of this land; and all, from the least to the greatest, be brought to know, and love, and serve, the Lord!

No man, of any common degree of intelligence, can view the present position of the British church and nation without feeling the greatest interest or alarm. We stand in that position in which all good men must mourn and tremble, while the wicked and profane will be glad and rejoice. The throne shaken to its root; the church assailed by treachery, violence, and fraud; the popular feeling unhinged, tampered with by designing men, and converted into the

medium of factious pursuits and dangerous experiments ; discontent deeply implanted in the heart, and mutual distrust seated on every man's brow ; wickedness of every description rife and rampant ; the fear of God, to an alarming extent, utterly cast off on the right hand and on the left, and greatly adulterated even where some regard is professed to be given to its sway ; the gospel of Christ set at nought, or made a byeword and scorn by multitudes in every part of the land ; the sabbath desecrated in an awful degree, more or less, by all orders of the realm ; the great and glorious name of THE LORD OUR GOD profaned and blasphemed both by rich and poor ; the agents of Satan in diligent employment on every side around us, disseminating the seeds of disaffection, infidelity, disloyalty, and every noxious ingredient, alike injurious to the present prosperity and eternal welfare of men ; and lastly, though not the least of all, the *Protestant* spirit of the nation greatly on the wane, and *Popery* putting forth its bold front, urging its untenable and unwarranted pretensions, and drawing thousands, by

degrees, within the vortex of its baneful influence;—is it not time to look into our actual condition? to inquire whether there may not be some cause for all these disasters, and what that cause may be? and so (through the divine guidance and blessing) be led to seek that remedy which alone can avail for the removal of so dangerous and fatal a complication of national disease? In a case where the symptoms are so clear, and the peril so manifest,—where so much is at stake, and so many are concerned,—it would argue the utmost insensibility, as well as the blindest infatuation, if we could view the present state of things without the liveliest anxiety for the probable result.

Should an undertaking of the character we avow be deemed of a novel description, because the public mind has not of late been urged to the consideration of the truths which it is the object of this work to elucidate and enforce, at least not in that prominent manner which the subject itself imperiously demands, that affords matter more for sorrow than censure, and opens the way for retrieving our steps, rather than per-

sisting in our heedless and unthinking career. And a great end will be gained if by any means, or in any measure, the national energy should be led to a more diligent activity in the cultivation and discharge of those duties which we all, not only owe unto God, but, are bound to render, in mutual interchange, one towards another. Indeed, the Author is not without hope that this subject begins already to break in upon the human mind in a new and powerful manner ; and it is with no small satisfaction he has been led to notice this circumstance as a very encouraging symptom amidst the dark and lowering aspect of the present times. Even since this undertaking has been in progress, he flatters himself he has had occasion to record the remark ; and should these and other subsequent discourses, humble and unassuming as they are, tend in any measure to deepen that feeling and foster that spirit, or elicit the latent powers of others and draw them out in harmonious co-operation to carry on this great design, it will be needless for him to say how great his satisfaction will be, should it be ultimately found that he has not laboured in vain.

It will therefore be easily seen that the subjects proposed for discussion in such a work as that before us, will be of a character congenial with the occasion which calls them forth, and calculated, by the blessing of HEAVEN, to furnish an effectual antidote for our national maladies and social dangers; and that, in order to be fairly dealt with, they ought to be handled in the spirit which themselves afford and on the principles which they alone can supply:—we mean, the principles of divine revelation, and the spirit which everywhere pervades the book of God;—in other words, in full accordance with our character and condition as sinners before God, under a dispensation of mercy through Jesus Christ. Any other mode of address could find no patronage from the Author's pen; nor would it be likely to advance the object he has in view, or receive the sanction and approval of the God of heaven.

Our beloved nation, so highly favoured of God, so exalted and honoured as the grand depository of divine truth, has long been, and still is, under the most awfully interesting and pe-

culiar circumstances ; and whether we may be given up as a prey to the machinations and power of our enemies, or come out of the furnace “ as gold seven times tried in the fire,” to be consecrated as an “ holy people unto the Lord,” is known only to him who is “ the governor among the nations ;” before whom they are “ as nothing ;” whose “ kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,” and “ whose dominion is from generation to generation ;” whose “ works are truth,” and all whose “ ways are judgment ;” and who, in solemn warning to all the haughty and guilty nations of the earth, hath said, “ and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”*

The author has only further to remark, that these sermons, which antecedently appeared in the “ Protestant Preacher” in uniform length, are here, for the sake of aiding the general reader, divided into distinct portions, still retaining their peculiar character, and preserving in one unbroken connexion the thread of the arguments adduced in their original shape, which at all hazards it was felt desirable to

* Dan. iv. 37.

maintain ; while, at the same time, each division thus made presents a separate subject of itself for serious consideration.

May the Lord be graciously pleased to smile upon the work, and crown it with his blessing ! For all that may be amiss, the Author earnestly craves forgiveness. Wherein he may fail in exhibiting the powerful claims of the doctrines he is anxious to enforce, (and well might it be asked “ who is sufficient for these things ? ”) he requests it may be charitably imputed to his own weakness and infirmities rather than attributed to any defect in the subject itself, which no mortal being, even though aided by a divine power, is able either fully to grasp, be his mind ever so capacious, or utterly exhaust, be his abilities ever so devoted. And for whatever measure of good may be accomplished, in every instance in which it may please the Author and Giver of all mercy to seal it with his divine benediction, he desires that the whole praise and glory may be rendered to him to whom alone it is due—Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

	PAGE
GOD'S SUPREME DOMINION AND UNIVERSAL AUTHORITY - - - - -	1

SERMON II.

THE SAME SUBJECT FURTHER OPENED - - - -	23
---	----

SERMON III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CARRIED ON AND CONCLUDED -	47
---	----

SERMON IV.

THE UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN - - -	74
---	----

SERMON V.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED IN FURTHER DETAIL	96
--	----

SERMON VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED AND IMPROVED -	118
---	-----

SERMON VII.

GOD'S REVEALED WILL THE ONLY SAFE RULE FOR ALL INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE, AND THE ONLY LEGITIMATE FOUNDATION FOR ALL NATIONAL LAW,	144
---	-----

SERMON VIII.

	PAGE
THE SAME SUBJECT CARRIED ON IN FURTHER IN- QUIRY - - - - -	170

SERMON IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED - - - - -	192
--------------------------------------	-----

SERMON X.

THE POSITIVE OBLIGATION OF ALL WHO HAVE RE- CEIVED THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD TO CONFORM TO IT, AS THE ONLY SURE DIRECTORY FOR ALL PERSONAL ACTION, AND THE ONLY SOLID BASIS FOR ALL NATIONAL POLICY AND LAW - - -	216
--	-----

SERMON XI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED -	240
--	-----

SERMON XII.

PRINCES AND RULERS, AS THE POSITIVE SERVANTS OF GOD, ARE BOUND TO PROMOTE THE INTERESTS OF HIS REVEALED WILL, AND THE HONOUR OF HIS NAME - - - - -	267
---	-----

SERMON XIII.

THE SAME SUBJECT FURTHER DEVELOPED - - -	287
--	-----

SERMON XIV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED - - - - -	308
--------------------------------------	-----

SERMON I.

GOD'S SUPREME DOMINION & UNIVERSAL AUTHORITY.

1 CHRONICLES, XXIX. 11, 12.

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all: Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all: and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.”

THE true knowledge of God must always be considered as the foundation of all acceptable religion; and this equally concerns communities and nations, as well as individuals. Error or mistake on this point cannot but be attended with the most fatal consequences. To affirm that there is “*no*” such Being, or to inscribe an altar to an “*unknown* God,” proclaims at once the desperate sin of the human heart, and the fearful condition into which ignorance and su-

perdition may lead multitudes of intelligent and immortal creatures. Nor is the danger of those less to be deplored who are unacquainted with the *way* by which alone this God can be approached with acceptance and peace ; or who are living regardless of that *salvation* of which, as sinners, all stand in need ; which alone can come from him ; and without which no one can be happy, either here or hereafter.

Hence we find, when the Lord reveals the purposes of his love and mercy, for the hope and guidance of perishing men, both as individuals and as collective bodies, so far at least as their personal application extends, it is said, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for *they* shall all know *me*, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord ; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* And the Saviour expressly affirms, "This is life eternal, that they might know *thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."† Something of the nature of these great truths hath already been considered in the subjects

* Jer. xxxi. 34.

† John, xvii. 3.

previously discussed in numbers 12, 23, 38, and 39, of this publication,* as exhibiting the being of that God with whom we have to do ; the way in which alone a sinner may find pardon and peace ; and the nature of that salvation without which no one can be delivered from his sins or inherit eternal life ; and the truths thus considered may be regarded as a sort of introduction to the grand doctrine before us, which is the basis of the undertaking on which we now enter. May the Lord be graciously pleased to prevent, guide, and direct us, by his blessed Spirit, and cause the whole to redound to his praise and glory !

The words of the text form part of a prayer—the last, the dying prayer of the “ man after God’s own heart.” It was the prayer of David for his son Solomon—of a father for his child—of one godly king, who had presided over the people of God for a great number of years, who had “ fed them with a faithful and true heart,

* These discourses originally appeared in that most useful periodical, “ *THE PROTESTANT PREACHER*,” which is expressly designed by the publisher for the promotion of scriptural instruction in Ireland ; and the author embraces this opportunity of recommending it to the notice of the Christian public at large.

and ruled them diligently with all his power,"* for another, who was to succeed him on the throne, and to whom would be entrusted the charge which he was about to lay down. Considered in this point of view, how interesting, as well as important, is the whole transaction brought under our notice! How few death beds, especially among princes, are like this! How seldom is such a spirit of true piety evinced at the present time in the dwellings of the ignoble and mean, or in the palaces of the mighty and great! And why? Because men are destitute of that godliness which possessed David's bosom, and which cheered and animated his departing soul! Oh! how terrible for ungodly princes, rulers, nobles, or people, to die at enmity with the blessed God, to be excluded from his kingdom and glory, and to perish for ever under his tremendous indignation! Oh! let all think of this in time, and prepare for that hour when the vain parade of the world will vanish from the grasp, and all the honour and glory of man will be for ever laid in the dust!

But what were the *peculiar feelings* which

* Ps. lxxviii. 72.

pervaded his mind at this solemn and interesting moment? It is not difficult to determine. They embraced the interests of true religion, and the honour and glory of God. A pious and godly prince himself, he had aimed, from the time he came to the throne of Israel, to promote its diffusion and influence throughout the realm. At one time in particular he had entertained the laudable intention of erecting a temple for the honour and service of his God ; and that too at a season when peculiar facilities appeared to be vouchsafed for the execution of that purpose.* This honour, however, was appointed for another ; yet the Lord graciously acknowledged the contemplated design, and, at the same time, was pleased to make known to him for whom that work was intended, and by whom it should be accomplished. That person was Solomon (a lively type of Christ, who should erect the *true* temple of redeemed sinners to the praise of the glory of divine grace)—and the time was now come when the father would rest in peace, and the son stand up in his place to fulfil the good pleasure of the Lord. All this is acknowledged in David's last address to the assembled people,

* 2 Sam. vii.

together with the provision which he, the princes, and the tribes had made for the work which Solomon was to complete,* and embodied by him in this prayer, of which the text forms a part.

What a scene is here presented to our notice ! The aged monarch, ready to enter the joy of his Lord, surrounded with "the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men,"†—first addressing "his brethren and his people;"‡ then warning and encouraging Solomon his son,§ giving him the pattern of the work which "the Lord had caused him to understand in writing by his hand upon him;"||—then again haranguing the whole assembly on the behalf of him whom the Lord had chosen to be their future sovereign,¶ telling them what himself had done for the work, and

* See 1 Chron. xxviii. &c. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 1, &c.

‡ Ver. 2. § Ver. 9, 10, &c. || Ver. 19—21.

¶ 1 Chr. xxix. 1—5.

making that solemn appeal,* “and who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?” “the people rejoicing, and David the king also rejoicing with great joy;”† and then, as the conclusion of the oration, “blessing the Lord before all the congregation,”‡ and embodying the whole in that sublime supplication of which the text constitutes the introductory part! In what a devout manner is the Lord here acknowledged as the author and giver of all mercies, national and individual; and as the hope and salvation of his people! Here is no honour ascribed to *man*; no mention is made of *human* valour, wisdom, merit, or beneficence! *The Lord* is acknowledged as the sole proprietor of all! His dominion is over all! All this goodness comes from *him*; all flows out of his fulness; and therefore all is dedicated to his service, that it might redound to his glory! It seems as if the royal saint had already left this earthly scene, were breathing the pure atmosphere of the heavenly world, and casting, not his earthly, but the crown of his salvation before the throne above, when he said, “*Thine*, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory,

* Ver. 5.

† Ver. 9.

‡ Ver. 10.

and the victory, and the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is *thine*; *thine* is the kingdom, O Lord, and *thou* art exalted as head above all," &c. &c. Nothing on earth can exceed this, especially as seen and confessed through the faith of the supreme Redeemer;* and all the blessedness above is but its perfection and consummation. The highest strains of the glorified multitudes around the throne can reach no higher, and extend no further, than the full completion of the initiatory address of this aged saint—"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and might, be unto our God and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."† And happy they who, like David, living and dying, are taught by the experience of the Lord's goodness and mercy in the Son of his love, Jesus Christ, to commence that song on earth which will be perpetuated for ever in the worlds beyond the skies.

One should think that it must be impossible to read these words, either as they stand by themselves, or in the context in which they are found, without at once perceiving the solemn feeling of David's mind. It was not the survey

* Eph. i. 20—23.

† Rev. v. 13, and vii. 12.

of his happy subjects nor his flourishing kingdom, the liberality of his princes nor the bountiful provision made for the temple of the Lord, that filled his soul. • No. The moment he approaches the great God in prayer, all these things are lost sight of. A grander Being and more glorious kingdom absorb his views ; and he falls down before him, in the amazing contrast, as a poor worm of the dust, acknowledging *Him* the supreme Lord of all ! This is the proper sensation of the creature, however dignified or humble ; and no man, nor any body of men, can ever be considered as being in a right frame of mind, till this discovery be made, this acknowledgment rendered, and this feeling prevail. The purport of this discourse is therefore at once apparent. By the Lord's blessing, we intend to consider, making the words of our text the basis of the subject, the following particulars :—

I. The supreme authority and dominion of the ever blessed God ;

II. The nature of that authority and dominion ; and

III. The aspect in which it is to be viewed by us ; together with some practical improvement of the whole.

In entering, however, on this subject, there are some few things which we must beg to premise :—

1. *With regard to the blessed God*; we do not mean to speak of that glorious Being in the simple abstract consideration of his essence or perfections; for that is a subject quite beyond the reach of any mere mortal creature. In this respect, “no man hath seen God at any time.” He “dwelleth in the light which no man can approach,” and “whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” It is with God as manifested in his works, and revealed in his word, that we have to do; and as “declared by the only begotten Son which dwelleth in the bosom of the Father.” Our inquiries therefore will not be of a speculative, but rather of a practical character. God, thus revealed and made known, is a being to be loved, feared, believed, honoured, and obeyed. God in his threefold denomination of subsistence, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be the theme of this discourse; as the Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Saviour, Sanctifier, Ruler, and Judge of men. What applies to *one* of these divine persons, equally applies to them *all*. “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not

three Gods, but one God," &c. &c. The authority, therefore, or sovereignty, of this great and glorious Being applies to each of the divine persons in the Godhead *separately* considered, as it does to the divine Being himself in his underived, indivisible, and essential Godhead, *simply* considered. For "the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord;" and each is "Almighty."*

2. *With regard to man as the creature of God;* we mean, man *as he is*, and not merely man *as he was*. Man was once a holy and happy being; he is now polluted and miserable. Once he was in the image of God; that image is now lost. He is now a sinner,—fallen, guilty, polluted, helpless, undone. There is no health in him. Still, however, he is God's creature, under all the obligations which necessarily subsist between the two parties, as being due from the one to the other; and that, too, notwithstanding his grievous lapse, and utter need of saving mercy. This remark, therefore, equally applies to *all* men, every where, of every rank and condition, throughout the whole world; from the prince on the throne down to the beggar on

* See Athanasian Creed.

the dunghill. For while, on the one hand, as the great Creator, the Lord asserts, "behold, all souls are mine;" on the other, as the moral Governor of the world, he proclaims, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* Now it is,

I. *Of the authority and sovereignty or dominion of this glorious Being* we are about to speak.

Such an authority can never be separated from him. God, under every possible consideration, must be supreme. Inferiority is an idea totally repugnant to the character of God. Neither can any creature, or thing, be elevated to the standard of an equality with him. As therefore he must be supreme, so must he reign over all. This will serve to give some insight into the grand doctrine of God's unrivalled dominion; as the apostle, speaking of "God manifest in the flesh," in the person of Jesus Christ, says, "who is over all, God blessed for ever."†

But this is not all. When we speak of God's universal authority, we mean, not merely his supremacy, by which he is immediately placed

* Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. iii. 23.

† Rom. ix. 5.

above all; nor simply his power, by which he rules *over* all; but, more especially, his divine sovereignty, necessarily springing out from his being and perfections, by which he has an absolute right, not only to claim *allegiance* from all, but to *dispose* of all according to his own will and pleasure. Till we arrive at this point, we never come to a right estimate of the character of this great and glorious being. One of the heaviest charges which God brought against the sinners of old was, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one *as thyself*; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes," &c.* Even that wicked man Balaam took care to remind Balak that "God is not a *man* that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should repent."† While the rule of duty laid down for the creature is plain, and the guilt and condemnation due to its violation are clear and unquestionable, "He giveth no account of his matters," and "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."‡

Now that such authority or sovereignty actually *resides* in, and is *exercised* by, the ever-blessed God, is evident from every part of his

* Ps. l. 21, 22.

† Num. xxiii. 19.

‡ Job, xxxiii. 13; Is. xlv. 10.

ways and works, as well as from every line of his revealed will; and this very fact is the grand foundation of the claims which he puts forth upon all his creatures, whether angels above or sinners upon earth, without any exception whatsoever. Nor does anything so clearly exhibit, on the one hand, the pride of an unhumiliated heart, as the denial of, or contending against, this grand prerogative of heaven; nor, on the other, evince a mind so truly enlightened and under the benign influence of saving grace, as a cheerful acquiescence in, and joyful acknowledgment of, this blessed truth. In all ages, while wicked men have hated, godly men have loved it. Every part of God's word teems with his glorious sovereign authority.

1. Witness *a few confessions*.

How grand, how sublime are the words of my text! "*Thine*, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is *thine*; *thine* is the kingdom, O Lord, and *thou* art exalted as head above all." Nor does the royal saint stop here. He goes on still further, and says, "Both riches and honour come of *thee*, and *thou* reignest over all: and in *thine* hand is power and might; and in *thine*

hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." These are not the unguarded expressions of heated zeal or ardent youth, but the utterance of ripened grace and matured age; not the measured words of polemical discussion, but the pure acknowledgment of a soul in its near approach to the throne of grace; not the effusions of an early course or a recent conversion, but the breathings of one who had long walked with God on earth, and was just on the point of being for ever with him in heaven. Ah! my friends, nearness to God in the faith of Christ, and nearness to glory in the full assurance of the heavenly inheritance, will present the God of our salvation in such a full tide of discovery to the soul as will swallow up every other consideration, and captivate every rising thought with his boundless grace and immeasurable immensity. Come and learn the universal authority and glorious sovereignty of God from the dying prayer of David.

Did the mantle fall *upon his son*? Did the same spirit animate the youthful prince, as he ascended the throne of his departed father? Let us hear what he says. In his opening prayer at the dedication of the temple, which he

was appointed to erect, how does he speak? "And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven; and he said, Lord God of Israel, *there is no God like thee in heaven above, or on earth beneath*, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart," &c.* Were others who *succeeded him* of the same mind? Take two instances of the royal lineage of David. What was the ground of *Hezekiah's* prayer when Jerusalem was threatened with destruction from the invading armies of the proud king of Assyria? "And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, *thou art the God, even thou alone*, of all the kingdoms of the earth; *thou hast made heaven and earth*," &c. &c.† No one can doubt for a moment the feeling that pervaded the mind of the royal suppliant. The

* 1 Kings, viii. 22, 23; 2 Chron. vi. 14.

† 2 Kings, xix. 14—19.

supreme authority, coupled with the absolute sovereignty and dominion of God, in covenant with his people, was the basis of his plea, and the ground of his hope of deliverance. Mark the prayer of *Jehoshaphat*, when there came a great multitude against him to battle, of the children of Ammon, and the children of Moab, with others confederate with them. What was the nature of his confession? What was the ground of his supplication? We are told that he “feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.” Here then is a memorable occasion, a vast congregation, and the king is the organ of the whole assembly. What does he say? “And *Jehoshaphat* stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not *thou* God in heaven, and rulest not *thou* over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in *thine* hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand *thee*? —O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company

that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: *but our eyes are upon thee.*”* Here, again, it is evident that Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Solomon, and David, were all of one mind. And oh! how delightful it is to trace such confessions of the glorious sovereignty of our God, from age to age, made by those who have known his name and confided in his salvation!

This was the case when they were in possession of the throne and kingdom of Israel. How was it afterwards, when they were in *captivity*, or about *to return* to their land? Turn to Nehemiah, ix. 4—6, and see. “Then stood up upon the stairs of the Levites—and cried with a loud voice unto the Lord their God: and said, Stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.” And then what follows? “*Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee,*” &c. &c. Observe here the same confession and acknowledg-

* 2 Chron. xx. 3—12.

ment of the universal authority and sovereignty of God, as in the instances before adduced. Can anything, then, be more clear than this—that no man, nor any number of people—an individual—a priest—a congregation—a prince—or a nation, can ever be considered as being in a right state of mind; or ever offer up an acceptable prayer, even in the Saviour's name, unless the great truth of the sovereign authority of God be humbly and heartily confessed, or at least implied in the groundwork of the supplication that is made for the mercy or deliverance asked?

But we must not rest here. The instances already adduced chiefly relate to temporal mercies and national transgressions and deliverances. How stands the case in respect of man's *personal iniquities* and *salvation*? Are the same confessions made in *this* case as in the other? Are the same authority and sovereignty recognised in the distribution of *gospel* blessings as in these national victories and triumphs? Exactly the same. To see this, let us come down to the New Testament. How does Jesus Christ himself teach us to pray? With what arguments does he fill our mouth when he would instruct us how to call upon this blessed God as “our Father which art in heaven,” as the ground of

all our supplications? "For," says he, "*thine* is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen."* This accords exactly with the prayer of David in the text. How does the apostle speak of the nature and source of a sinner's salvation through the Saviour's undertaking and death? Take Ephes. i. 3—6. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, *according to the good pleasure of his will*, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." This is nothing more than the glorious truth of my text drawn out in personal application to the *souls*, as well to the bodies and temporal affairs of men. The Lord reigns in our salvation, as well as in our creation and preservation.

Does this apply merely to the conversion of such sinners as the Ephesians were before the

* Matt. vi. 13.

day-spring from on high visited them? How does he speak of *his own* conversion and salvation? To *whom* does he ascribe the praise of that unmerited blessing? Hear his own words. Recounting to Timothy* what the Lord had done for him in this respect, causing his grace to be “exceeding abundant” towards him, and “shewing forth in him all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting,” he pours forth the grateful, adoring, feeling of his soul in these words—“Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Just like David in my text, he traces all up to the goodwill and pleasure of God. All these blessings came from *him*; all flowed out of *his* fulness; and therefore, to *him* he renders all the praise and glory! Delightful spirit! blessed theme!—And, to adduce but one other instance, in what manner does Jude, in his catholic epistle, warning the church of God of her danger, both from open and insidious enemies, and encouraging believers to “build themselves up on their most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost

* 1 Tim. i. 11—17.

to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"—in what way does he point out the stability of their hope and the security of their souls? He does it in this manner: "Now, unto him that is *able* to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

* Ver. 20—25.

SERMON II.

THE SAME SUBJECT FURTHER OPENED.

1 CHRONICLES, xxix. 11, 12.

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all: Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.”

So much for the confessions and acknowledgments of the people of God. Let us come and see in the next place,

2. How the Lord *asserts and claims* this glorious prerogative as *peculiar to himself*.

With what grandeur and sublimity does he speak by the mouth of Moses!* “See now that *I*, even *I*, am he, and there is no god with me. *I* kill, and *I* make alive; *I* wound, and *I* heal:

* Deut. xxxii. 39—43.

neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For *I* lift up my hand to heaven, and say, *I* live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." What a glorious God is this! How happy are they who have him for their portion! How wretched are they who have this God for their enemy! Might we not exclaim with this holy man in another place,* when recording the glorious triumphs of this great God over his proudly opposing enemies,—“Who is like unto *thee*, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto *thee*, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” And might we not add, in the words of the passage above partly quoted—“Rejoice, O ye nations with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people?”—But turn to the prophet Isaiah, and hear how

* Exod. xv. 11.

the Lord speaks by him. "To whom, then, will ye liken *me*, or shall I be equal, saith the holy One? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold *who* hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."* Must not the view of such a God as this ensure the confusion of his enemies, and the stability of his church and people?—Go a little further.† "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; *I* will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." That is, all enemies shall fall, and all dangers shall vanish away, when *the Lord* interposes his omnipotent arm for the safety or deliverance of his helpless and oppressed people! Can anything be more awakening to the foes of Zion, or more

* Isaiah, xl. 25, 26.

† xli. 14—16.

encouraging to them that can rejoice in her King?—Take another instance. The Father animates Christ in the prospect of his undertaking, and declares that its end shall be accomplished. “Thus saith God the Lord, *he* that created the heavens, and stretched them out; *he* that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; *he* that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. I am the *Lord*; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”* In another place, speaking of the predicted return of his people from Babylon, even before their captivity took place, he says,† “I am the Lord, your holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army

* Is. xlii. 5—8.

† xliii. 15—17.

and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinct, they are quenched as tow." What shall be the consequence? Therefore "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."*

Instances of this kind might be multiplied without end; and they must strike the attention of every one who carefully reads the sacred volume. But take another of a different description. The Lord declares the manner in which he will *punish* Israel as a *nation*, for their *national crimes*. Jeremiah is the agent employed to announce the prediction: he foretels that the Lord would bring upon them, as the executioner of his vengeance, "a nation, a mighty nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say." He foretels what they would do, in impoverishing their land and destroying the people; and when they should inquire, "Wherefore doth the Lord our God all these things unto us?" the prophet was to

* Is. xxxv. 10.

answer, "Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours." And then, in order to direct their attention to the great guilt they had contracted, and this tremendous national visitation to which they were exposed as its alarming consequence, and to stir them up to a timely consideration of their state and danger, the Lord commissions the prophet thus:—"Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: Fear ye not *me*? saith the Lord: Will ye not tremble at *my* presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season; he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and

your sins have withholden good things from you."* No one, again, can read these words without perceiving the sovereign authority of God pervading the whole. *Why* does he arraign them for their sins? Because he has a right to their allegiance. *Why* does he declare that he will punish them in this manner? Because all nations are at his disposal, and he can with the utmost ease make one the instrument of executing his wrath upon another. *Why* does he rebuke them for their guilt and rebellion by contrasting their revoltings with the obedience of the raging waves of the sea, which keeps within its sphere, and never exceeds the boundaries of its limits? Because he had so appointed it, and his decree stood fast for ever. *Why*, again, did he charge them with forgetfulness and ingratitude for the common bounties of his providence? Because he had given the one and appointed the other. In every respect, the authority and sovereignty of God plainly appear.

The same truth is more especially asserted and claimed for *the Lord Jesus Christ*, of whose "government and peace there shall be no end."

* Jer. v. 20—25.

"I saw," says the prophet Daniel,* "in the night-visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." What is this but the clear prediction of what our Lord himself asserted in actual fulfilment?—"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."† Hence, in his last prayer before his crucifixion, he said,‡ "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him *power over all flesh*, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Hence, again, after his resurrection, he said, "All power is

* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

† John, v. 22, 23.

‡ xvii. 2.

given unto *me* in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever *I* have commanded you: and, lo, *I* am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* And after his ascension into heaven and session at the right hand of the Majesty on high, how grand is the apostle’s description of the dominion and glory with which, as the one Mediator between God and man, he is crowned!—“*Far above* all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be *head over all things* to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all!”† What a glorious Saviour! Hence, one way or other, either in judgment or mercy, “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.”‡ Hence, again, the cheer-

* Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

† Eph. i. 21—23.

‡ Philip. ii. 9—11.

ing declaration, "wherefore *he is able* also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."* Blessed truth! To the uttermost! No bounds, no limits can be assigned to the saving power of his outstretched arm! All sins shall be forgiven, all enemies subdued, and all difficulties overcome! Why? Because he reigneth over all! And hence, again, on the other hand, the awful sentence—"But those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me;" and the seasonable admonition—"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."†

Nor does this glorious truth rest here. *God the Spirit* is equally possessed of this sovereign authority as God the Father and God the Son. As "*the Lord and giver of life*," we avow our belief in him every Sabbath in the face of

* Heb. vii. 25.

† Ps. ii. 10—12.

God and his people. And can anything be more cheering or glorious than this? How, were it *not* so, could a sinner ever be brought to know and love the Lord? And how, since it *is* so, can any one fail of salvation if *He* undertake to put forth his gracious operations? Observe the words of our blessed Lord: When *he* is come, *he* will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. *He*, the Spirit of truth, will guide you into all truth. *He* will shew you things to come. *He* shall glorify me. *He* shall take of mine and shew it unto you.* And what shall follow? Everything that may be comprehended under that term "*darkness*,"—pride, prejudice, ignorance, unbelief, self-righteousness, hardness of heart, impenitence, and every other obstruction to the sinner's salvation, will all vanish away before the bright shining of the "true light"—Christ Jesus—when this gracious Spirit shall work in the heart, and glorify him in the soul! Hence the apostle affirms,† "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the

* John, xvi. 8—15.

† 2 Cor, iii. 17, 18.

same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Hence the kind and gracious promise of Christ—"the Father will give the *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him.* Hence the awakening assertion, "Except a man be born again of *the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"† and "if any man have not the *Spirit* of Christ, he is none of his."‡ Nor is there a greater crime under heaven than to *blaspheme the Holy Ghost*; for whosoever is guilty of *that sin* "shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come, but is in danger of eternal damnation."§

The truth, then, of God's supreme dominion; as a plain matter of fact, is evident. The best of men have always *confessed* it, and the Lord himself invariably *claims* and *asserts* it. And this applies to the whole persons in the God-head, as revealed to us in his ways, works, and word. Having laid the foundation of the fact, let us go on to shew—

II. The *nature* of this supreme dominion and sovereign authority.

The bare truth itself carries along with it the

* Luke, xi. 13.

† John, iii. 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 9.

§ Mark, iii. 28, 29.

impression of its own proper nature. It is the authority and sovereignty of *God*; and therefore it is not only of, but it is just *like*, himself. It is a *divine* authority; it is a *divine* sovereignty. But, since it is requisite that we should view it in its true character, we shall lay down a few distinct considerations, illustrative of the doctrine before us, both in its negative and positive bearings. Observe, then—

1. It is not a *deputed* or *delegated* authority. God receives it from no one above him, below him, or equal to him; but it is in, of, and entirely from, himself alone. It is not like the authority of *man*, which is put into his hand by another, who holds him accountable for its use to the source from whence he receives it. God possesses it entirely in and from himself, as God; he is accountable to no superior, equal, or inferior, for its exercise; he giveth no account of his matters; there is no bar before which he can be arraigned, for he “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” And this equally applies, in the full tide of his dominion, to all beings and all things; to angels in heaven, and creatures upon earth; to crowns and kingdoms, as well as to the souls and

bodies of men. God is supreme over all. Again,

2. It is not an *assumed* or *usurped authority*. He took it from no being; deprived no one of its possession; nor robbed any of its sway. It is his by virtue of his own uncreated existence and his essential and underived perfections. Men often usurp that which does not belong to them, causing misery and death to thousands in the attainment of their object; but it is not so with the Lord. "Power *belongeth* unto God." It is his right, sole, and inherent possession. Through what seas of blood have some men waded to a throne; and then, as soon as they have attained the dangerous and guilty pre-eminence, how have they been hurled from its possession, by a power superior to their own, and swept away as if they had never been! Not so with God. "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations." Further,

3. It is not an *arbitrary authority*: neither fickle, blind, perverse, nor selfish. Every one knows how the little power of man is generally exercised. A blind adherence to self-interest, or self-will, marks the words and actions of

puny mortals. Not so again is it with God. True, he performeth the good pleasure of his will in all his sovereign authority; but then his *will* is just like his *law*, "holy, just, and good;" and cannot but be so, because it is *his* will. The reservation of the fallen spirits in chains of everlasting darkness unto the judgment of the great day, and the casting all the finally wicked and impenitent into hell, together with all the nations that forget God—fearful and tremendous as this exercise of his authority may appear—are as good and necessary in the government of his kingdom, as the extension of mercy to his people, and raising them to eternal life and glory! Such is the *negative* view of the nature of this authority. Let us see next its *positive* character. This sovereign authority of God then—

4. Is *universal*. No bounds or limits can be assigned, (beyond his own sovereign decree,) in whatever way he is pleased to exercise it. All creatures and all things are under this authority and subject to this dominion. The angels in heaven, the devils in hell; man upon earth, and saints in glory; the heavens above, with all their shining hosts; the earth beneath, with all its innumerable inhabitants, as well as its vast pro-

ductions; man, endued with an immortal soul, and the beasts, which are guided only by native instinct; *kings* on their thrones, surrounded with all the pomp and splendour of royalty; and *subjects* under their sway, amidst all their various gradations, from the prime minister, that holds the royal ear, down to the poor peasant that dwells in the lowly hut; the haughty *warrior*, that hath traversed fields of carnage and blood, and been proclaimed victorious amidst the groans of the dying and mangled bodies of the dead; the keen *statesman*, eager for the applause of frail worms, mortal like himself, watching for every opening to gain a wordy triumph, and sighing with a turbid breast for honours that vanish from his grasp; the titled *noble*, elated with all the vain parade of dignity of birth and ancestry of fame, (not always to be reviewed without a conscious blush of shame,) and looking down upon others as an inferior race of beings, with something of the feeling that dictated that guilty speech—“Stand by thyself, come not near me; I am holier than thou;” the wealthy *merchant*, amidst the busy scenes of his adventurous speculations, searching from one end of the earth to the other for incense to be offered at the golden shrine of Mammon; the country

esquire, amidst all his rural revelries, pastimes, and pursuits; the active *tradesman*, devoted to his shop, anxious for the inquiry of the coming customer, and still more to thrust his ready hand into the depth of his till, or cast his eager eye over the pages of his ledger, and mark with keen discernment the amount of his profits and gains; the busy *farmer*, immersed in all the cares and toils of his fields, at the noisy market, or crowded fair, favoured every day with opportunities for learning something, at least, of the character of that God with whom we have to do, yet not unfrequently found as ignorant of him as the cattle which overspread his lands; the needy *labourer*, toiling in the sweat of his brow for a scanty subsistence for himself and family, and often pinched for the common necessities of life; the mitred *prelate*, that presides over the affairs of the church, spending his time in courtly attendance and lordly ease more than in doing the work of an evangelist, and feeding the church of God; which he hath purchased with his own blood; the *minister*, in his stated sphere, surrounded with the souls entrusted to his care, whether an ambassador of peace and preaching Christ to his flock, or a slumbering watchman, and faithless steward, invested with the dress, but not

caring for the souls of the sheep; and the *people* of his charge, who attend his ministrations, whether for life or death; the master and servant, the husband and wife, the parent and child, the brother and sister, the neighbour and friend,—in short, *all*, from the highest to the lowest, are subject to the supreme authority of Almighty God, owe all their allegiance to him, and will all receive their doom at his hands, whether judgment or mercy, whether for glory in heaven or misery and woe in the dark pit below! “There is no respect of persons with God.” He who hath said, to the *prince* as well as to the *beggar*, to a *nation* as well as to a *single individual*, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself,” and declared, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;” hath also said, that “we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* And who will be able to escape

* 2 Cor. v. 10,

that sentence, "Depart, ye cursed," &c., on whom it may be pronounced; or fail of that glory, to whom will be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world"? God's sovereign authority extends over *all*. All are accountable to him; *all*, sooner or later, must bow to his decisions; and, either in mercy or wrath, shew forth his praise and glory.

5. It is *equitable*. Surely it is right that he who made the world should govern it! Surely it is right that he who made man should govern him! Surely it is right that he, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," should claim the homage of that life which we receive from his hands! Surely it is right that he who gave us an immortal soul, endued with faculties capable (by the energy of his grace) of knowing, loving, and serving him, should claim the devotion of those faculties with which he himself hath invested us! Surely it is right that he should vindicate the honour of that law, in the regulation of his kingdom, which he hath enjoined as the expression of his will and the rule of our actions! and that, too, whether it respects one person or ten thousand—a single being, a whole community, or the great bulk of the human

race! Surely it can be no injustice in God to punish sin, in whatever way he may choose, since he alone is the party aggrieved, he alone can appreciate its nature, and he alone pronounce its adequate reward! Whether that sentence include the loss of his favour, banishment from his presence, consignment to wrath, and that for ever and ever, it must be a just decision, reasonable in its nature as well as equitable in its award, if it come from *him* and drop from *his* lips. And if all have sinned, forfeited his favour, and come short of his glory, surely none can charge him with injustice if he extend his mercy to any one, or to whomsoever he will! If he cast the sinner into hell, he will do him no wrong; if he have mercy upon his soul, he will exceed his largest expectations. None can charge God with injustice; none can say, This is not proper, or, That should not be so. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" The same equally applies to every other consideration in which the condition and welfare of man are concerned. If he gave us life, has he not a right to take it away, when and how he will? If all things are at his disposal, has he not a right to give them to whom he will, or withhold them as he sees good? Who will dare to lift

up his hand, or exalt his tongue, against God? Look at nations, kings, princes, governors, as well as individuals and people. Might he not debase one and exalt another as he pleases? How should it be seen that he is *God*, if he did not exert his authority? Would he not be ejected from his throne, and man elevated to its possession, (we mean, at least, in the lofty pride of the heart,) if he were not to prove, by practical demonstration, that it is by *his* authority "kings reign and princes decree justice;" and that at *his* command "nations rise and fall, flourish and decay?" We see how the case stands, *even as it is*; what then would it be if there were *no* such displays of the sovereign authority of the ever-blessed God? See the haughty king of Babylon. "Is not this great Babylon," said that proud worm,—"*great Babylon*, which *I* have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Surely it was equitable in God to hurl him from his throne, to cause him to be driven from men, and make his dwelling with the beasts of the earth, until he should be brought to know that "*the Most High* ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he

giveth it to whomsoever he will!"* And what if kings and nations, nobles, princes, and people, still refuse to honour him as the sovereign Lord of all, is it not *right* that he should interpose, wrest their crowns from their heads, and lay their honour in the dust? How else could the sceptre of his kingdom be a *right* sceptre? How else could it be seen that he "loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity?" As the prophet Isaiah,† speaking of the glory and prosperity of the church, says, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish;" how much more may we affirm it of him that ruleth over all? If God will so honour his church and people, by the confusion and destruction of their enemies, how much more is he himself to be honoured in all his ways and works? How unanswerable is the plea which himself puts forth on this subject? "Will ye not fear *me*?" Will you not, ought you not, is it not right and just that you should do so? Again, "A *son* honoureth his father, and a *servant* his master: if then *I* be a father, where is *mine* honour; and if *I* be a master, where is *my* fear? saith the

* Dan. iv. 30—32.

† lx. 12.

Lord of hosts unto you, that despise my name?"* Nay, even that most grand and sublime of all his sovereign determinations, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion;" or, "Even for this same cause have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name may be declared throughout the earth,"† is as equitable and holy as it is supreme and glorious! Hath not God a right to do what he will with his own? Is thine eye evil because he is good? Besides, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"‡ Who quarrels with the potter in the execution of his work? Who finds fault with him for digging the clay out of the pit, employing it for his use, taking what he likes, and moulding it after his will? Does he not know best how to manage it, what use to make of it, and for what purposes it will best serve? Let no one, then, arraign the blessed God. The dominion which he exercises is an equitable dominion. "Woe unto him that striveth with

* Mal. i. 6. † Rom. ix. 15—17. ‡ Rom. ix. 21. •

46 GOD'S SUPREME DOMINION, ETC.

his Maker ! Let the potsherd strive with the
potsherds of the earth.* “Justice and judgment
are the habitation of his throne,” as surely
as “mercy and truth go before his face.”

* Is. xlv. 9, 10.

SERMON III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CARRIED ON AND CONCLUDED.

I CHRONICLES, XXIX. 11, 12.

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all : Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all ; and in thine hand is power and might ; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.”

MAGNIFICENT and glorious as is the truth brought under notice in our previous contemplations, we are not permitted as yet to announce its dismissal. If the supreme dominion and authority of the ever-blessed God be neither deputed nor delegated, neither assumed nor usurped, neither arbitrary nor fickle ; and if it be universal and equitable ; then we must perceive that

6. It is *irresistible*. Nothing can arrest its progress, or defeat its design ; nay, everything

shall be made to subserve this authority and facilitate its execution. "The counsel of the Lord shall endure for ever, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation." This was the very confession to which Babylon's once haughty monarch was brought, who before ascribed the glory to himself. "And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* What a glorious description of the irresistible sovereignty of the blessed God! See it in practical detail. Did the angels rebel? He cast them down from their thrones into the dark abyss below! Would he make the worlds? He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood forth! Would he deluge the earth for the sins of men? At his command the windows

* Dan. iv. 34, 35.

of heaven are opened, the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and all are swept away in one general devastation! Would he bring forth his people from the bondage and tyranny of their oppressors? The counsels of Pharaoh are defeated, all creatures obey his mighty order, the heart of the cruel tyrant is hardened in its own hardness and taken in its own devices, and at length, with one great deliverance, the victory is gained,—the horse and the rider are overthrown in the waters, and the Lord is proclaimed supreme over all! Would he afterwards protect them from their enemies, and lead them to the promised possession? All nature conspires together for that purpose. The waters of Jordan open a way for the ransomed to pass over; the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground; the heavens are arrested in their progress; the sun stands still in Gibeon, and hastens not to go down for a whole day; the moon is suspended over the valley of Ajalon; and the stars in their courses fight against Sisera! And so, sooner or later, shall “all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let those that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength.” See again the irresistible sovereignty of God in the case of others, as well the nation's here de-

scribed. Where is Nineveh,—Babylon,—Tyre and Sidon,—Greece and Rome,—and others of modern date, whose history and doom are known and read of all? Gone, crushed, swept away as though they had never been! “The hammer of the whole earth hath been again and again broken to pieces;” and the very beasts have sung and rejoiced that the mighty are fallen, and are no more! Look again at the inward state of men’s minds, and the internal order and management of kingdoms. “When *he* giveth quietness, *who* then can make trouble? and when *he* hideth his face, *who* then can behold him? whether it be done against a *nation* or a *man* only.”* “In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away; and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. For his eyes are upon the ways of men, and he seeth all their goings.”† But in all this “he will not lay upon man more than is right; that he should enter into judgment with God.”‡ Behold the manner in which the Lord will effect the conversion and salvation of his people! “Fear not, for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the

* Job, xxxiv. 29.

† Ver. 20, 21.

‡ Ver. 23.

west. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory; I have formed him, yea, I have made him.”* And how will this glorious sovereignty of God be seen at last when the earth and the heavens shall flee away from his presence; when he will wrap them together as a scroll, and fold them up, and lay them aside (having accomplished their purpose) as worn-out garments; when he will consign the wicked to hell, and introduce his redeemed into the worlds of bliss and glory! In every point of view the dominion of our God is irresistible. None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Our remarks are merely of a cursory character; the subject is too vast and too extensive to be handled in a single discourse, and other considerations are yet to be adduced. We cannot omit, however, to notice that—

7. It is *everlasting*. There never can be the time when such dominion may cease in the person of the great God. He can no more be divested of such an authority, or lay aside its

* Is. xliii. 5—7.

exercise, than he can cease to be God, or be stripped of his prerogatives and perfections. As "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed, even from everlasting he was God;" so "to everlasting will he be the same.*" "There is no variableness, nor shadow of turning with him." "He is the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever." As before time was, and throughout its whole continuance; so when it shall be no more, he will reign supreme over all! In heaven as well as upon earth; surrounded with all his glorified hosts above; as well as looking down upon, and presiding over, the puny affairs of mortal men; he holds the sceptre and fills the throne! Head over all—the church triumphant as well as militant—will the God of our salvation be seen and acknowledged for ever! Every crown will be cast at his feet; every harp will be struck up in his praise; every bosom will glow with his love; every tongue will utter forth his glory! This will constitute, not only the *bliss*, but the *stability*, of the heavenly state. Could the authority and dominion of our God ever, by the least possible contingency, come to an end, farewell *ever-*

* Psalm xc. 2.

lasting life and *eternal* glory! The golden harps must be laid aside; the songs of Zion must cease to be sung; and the day would come when the bright stars of glory must fall from their firmament, the Sun of Righteousness become black as sackcloth, and the whole glorified church, like the moon, deriving all her light and salvation from him, be converted into blood!* But, blessed be God, this can never be the case. "His kingdom is an *everlasting* kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations." The same truth equally applies to the *wicked* as to the righteous; to the *impenitent* sinner as well as to the redeemed and converted saint. The same authority will be exercised over both the one and the other, though not for the same purpose, nor for the same end. He whose kingdom and supremacy are the security of his people, to perpetuate their eternal bliss and glory, reigns equally over the devil and his angels, and all who will have their doom with them, to ensure their misery throughout all the ages of eternity. Not a single lost spirit can escape from the bottomless pit; not a single torment can be abated; not a single flame can be quenched, for ever and ever; because he is

* Rev. vi. 12—14.

God over all! The burning lake may roll its fearful flood backwards and forwards from one end to the other; but no egress can be found! The wretched inmates of that horrible dungeon may attempt to flee from the bitter pains of eternal death; but they never can escape, nor ever obtain the least mitigation—no, not a drop of water to cool their burning tongue! No cries or shrieks may ever blunt the pangs, or drown the stings, of the guilty conscience, then without hope or mercy; nor will the smoke of their torment ever cease to ascend, as the index of their misery, and pledge of their woes, for ever and ever! He that holds the keys of heaven, has the keys of hell and of death.* He reigns in the full tide of his might, executing vengeance upon his enemies, and crowning his people with glory and peace! Nothing can shake his authority, lessen his power, or uproot his throne! From everlasting to everlasting he is God over all, blessed for ever!

Such is the nature of this Divine authority. It is not a deputed, nor an usurped, nor an arbitrary authority; but it is universal, equitable, irresistible, everlasting. If time and space per-

* Rev. i. 18.

mitted, much more might be said of this glorious prerogative; but we must hasten to exhibit—

III. The *aspect* in which it is to be *viewed* by us, making some improvement of the whole.

There is no one thing in which the poor worms and broken potsherds of the earth are more disposed to contend with God than this very truth, which constitutes the essence of his being and glory. Here it is that we hear one saying, “Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice,”* another affirming, “Our tongues are our own; who is Lord over us?”† and another, in the full spirit of the deepest enmity, checked, though not subdued, “Why then doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?”‡ But while others thus gainsay and rebel, “O come, let *us* worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.”§ And although there are many things in this glorious truth beyond the reach of our present capacity, let us take what is plain, view it as the word of God exhibits it, and learn improvement for our souls’ everlasting welfare. Let us behold it,

1. As a *most glorious doctrine*. What incom-

* Ex. v. 2.

† Ps. xii. 4.

‡ Rom. ix. 19.

§ Ps. xcv. 6.

parable greatness, what unutterable grandeur, what indescribable glory, beams forth from this feeble view of the ever-blessed God! How does every created thing sink down into absolute insignificance in comparison of Him "who rideth upon the heavens in his help, and in his excellency on the sky!"* What are all the crowns and kingdoms of the earth; what are all the "principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;" contrasted with him who has them all "put under his feet," and who "sitteth over all from the beginning, sending out his voice, yea, and that a mighty voice!" Everything obeys his will, and submits to his authority. The sun shines at his command; the moon gives her feebler light; and the stars, at his disposal, are studded over the vast firmament on high. The heavens are thine; the earth is thine; the day is thine; the night is thine. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom, as well as power and might, hast thou made them all! Come, O ye sons of men, and bow down before this glorious God! Come, ye kings and princes, and cast your crowns at his feet! Come, ye

* Deut. xxxiii. 26.

nations and people, own your dependence upon him ; honour and serve him ; and give him the glory due to his name. Come, and, with the royal saint in my text, confess “ Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.” Let nothing be derogated from his glory. Let the full revenue of praise be ascribed to his name. Go on with the aged saint, and say, “ Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all ; and in thine hand is power and might ; and in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.” In this manner “ give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength ; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”* This is the proper feeling of the *creature*, deriving all his being and blessings from his sovereign Creator ; of the *sinner*, entirely dependent for life and salvation on his gracious Redeemer ; of the *believer* on earth in the enjoyment of present mercies and peace ; and of the *saint* above in full possession of the hea-

* Psalm xxix. 1, 2.

venly inheritance, receiving all from, and owing all to, the goodness and grace of his glorious Saviour! Blessed, then, be the Lord, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen."* Let us behold it also,

2. As a *most humiliating doctrine*. This was the very feeling wrought in David's bosom on the view and expression of the Divine greatness and glory. "But who am I," says he, "and what is my people? For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."† And does not the same feeling become *ourselves*? Who and what are *we*, contrasted with this glorious God? If, with the prophet, our eyes have ever seen the king, the Lord of hosts, have we not cause to say with him, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips"?‡ When brought, even in the present view of the mind, before this glorious Being, must we not stand in awe in his presence? When we consider that we are always under the

* Ps. lxxii. 18, 19. † Ver. 14, 15. ‡ Is. vi. 5.

inspection of his eye, and altogether at his disposal; that his sentence is irreversible, and that his wrath burns like fire; must we not be abased before him? When we hear him uttering his sovereign greatness—"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; and meted out heaven with a span; and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"—when we hear him putting forth the mighty challenge, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed him understanding?"—when we hear him declaring, "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity;"* when we hear the great God thus declaring his glory, and then turn our eyes up to his throne on high, and see all the orders of angels and archangels, all the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, which no man can number,

* Is. xl.

“falling down before him that sitteth on the throne, and worshipping him that liveth for ever and ever, and casting their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created;”*—what is *our* proper feeling, but the deepest humility; or *our* becoming position, but the lowest abasement? And *are* we then thus humble, thus abased? Are we thus laid low in this amazing contrast? *Have* the towering thoughts of our pride been pulled from their elevation, and every vain idea of self-importance cast down before the throne of the ever-blessed God? If *not*, consider, O man, whoever thou art, whether high or low, or rich or poor, thy sad, thy most fearful condition. “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Wilt thou then declare war with the God of heaven, and madly rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler? Pause and consider. “Beware lest he cut thee off with a stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.”† Let us also behold it as,

3. *A most alarming doctrine.* We must not shut our eyes to any aspect in which the cha-

* Rev. iv. 8—11.

† Job, xxxvi. 18.

racter or truth of God may be presented to our view. To derive a full advantage, we must take a full survey. God's character is like his word ; it speaks in various ways and to different sorts of men. How can it be otherwise ? This is the God whose laws have been broken, and whose fear hath been renounced by the guilty world. This is the God who hates sin wherever he sees it, and is bound to punish wherever he finds it. This is the God that reads every thought which springs up in the heart, hears every word which drops from the lips, and beholds every deed that is done in the life. This is the God that witnesses all our national guilt, and records all our individual crimes. And what then, O sinner, must become of *thee*, when this great God shall rise up to enter into judgment with thee ; especially if he find thee out of Christ naked and defenceless in all thy sins ? What, though thou art now hardened ; will he not then, at least, make thee feel ? What, though thou art now thoughtless and secure ; will he not, sooner or later, break thy slumbers, and scatter thy delusive dreams ? Hast thou ever considered that question,—“ What shall I do when God riseth up ? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him ? ” If not, lay it home to thy

conscience, and flee to the cross of Christ for an early reply. Think not that thou canst elude his search, or escape his arm. "Can any hide himself from me, that I should not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth with my presence?" Though thou roam over the world at large, God's eye is upon thee; and God's hand holds thee. In the boundless range of his immense omniscience, already does he bind thee as a victim to his justice, and hereafter will his sword be lifted up to cut thee off for ever. There is a way in which this glorious God may be viewed and known as merciful and gracious;—perhaps thou despisest that way! There is One in whom he is well pleased, and for whose sake he may be known and loved as a Father;—perhaps thou settest at nought the Son of his love!—perhaps thou art of the number of those who say, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!" Well, then, hear the voice of eternal truth:—"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."* Or, possibly, thou art of the number of those who say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Hear the ready reply, "Yet a little while, and he that

* Psalm ii.

shall come will come, and will not tarry." At the present moment nothing perhaps can daunt thy hardened soul. Well, be it so; but "thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come"—not to be again a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but to be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" and, oh fearful sentence! to "punish with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." What, O impenitent sinner, will then become of *thee*? To *whom* wilt thou flee? *Where* wilt thou leave thy glory? Wilt thou "dig into hell?" God's hand shall take thee thence. Wilt thou "climb up to heaven?" Thence will he pull thee down. Wilt thou "hide thyself on the top of Carmel," or "in the bottom of the sea?" God will search and take thee out thence. Or dost thou ask, *who* it is that will thus deal with thee in the day of his wrath? "It is he that buildeth his stories in the heavens, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that

calleth forth the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; **THE LORD IS HIS NAME.**"* O sinner, we beseech thee, think in time; and hearken to one who knew the value of the advice he recommended. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come to thee."† Yes, it shall be for thy present and eternal welfare to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

And is not this truth equally alarming to guilty *nations*, as well as to guilty *individuals*? Does it not concern those who are involved in a *nation's* guilt, as well as those who are answerable to God for their own crimes? And how does it speak to *our own* sinful land, and *our own* rulers and people? Have not our national sins reached up unto heaven; and has not their cry entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts? In what an alarming manner, then, does the sovereign dominion of God speak to *us*? Cannot this great God bring down our national pride, and punish our national sins? Mark his dealings with wicked Israel of old—"Arise; go down," said the Lord to Jeremiah,‡ "to the

* Amos, ix. 1—6. † Job, xxii. 21. ‡ xviii. 1—11.

potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words." Alas! is not the same spectacle presented to our view, in reference to ourselves, as the prophet saw respecting his own people? Is not the national vessel "marred, and broken in pieces"? Might we not cry out, in the mournful strains of another prophet,* "How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross; thy wine mixed with water; thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come before them." Shall we be surprised, then, if "the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, saith, Ah! I will *ease* me of mine adversaries, and *avenge* me of mine enemies?" Is he not *provoked* to do this? Is he not *able* to do this? O England, hear the voice of the great God to *thee*, as well as to Israel of old—"Cannot I do with you, as this potter, saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." Hear then the instructive

* Is. i. 21—24.

sequel. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, *turn* from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it *do evil* in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the *good* wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you; return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good!" Ah! "sinful nation," can thine heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in the day when God will deal with thee? O! "hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord God hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."* But again; let us behold it,

4. As a *most encouraging doctrine*. Every

* Jer. xiii. 15, 16.

truth of God has its encouraging, as well as its alarming voice, according to the aspect in which it is viewed. Suppose this great and glorious God should condescend to look with pity upon the miseries of men, and graciously exert himself on their behalf—can anything frustrate his design or hinder his benevolent purpose? Can his arm be ever shortened that it cannot save? “Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord. Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb, saith thy God?”† He who is *able* to save, when he *begins* to save, cannot *but* save. How cheering, how encouraging, then, is this truth, especially when viewed in the face of Jesus Christ! See it in *temporal* things. Take a *nation*, for instance, in its lowest depressions, like Israel of old when they said, “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; for we are cut off from our parts.” Cannot the Lord breathe upon the slain, and make them live? Cannot the Lord open their graves, and cause them to come up out of their graves, and work a mighty deliverance for them? See Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14, for an example of what the Lord can do for nations in their lowest

* Is. lxvi. 9.

depths, scattered and peeled, trodden down and destroyed, in their revivification and unexpected restoration. Behold it in *spiritual* blessings. Take the case of an *afflicted saint*. What made the heart of Hannah to rejoice in the Lord, and her mouth to be enlarged over her enemies? It was the glorious truth of God's supreme dominion exhibited in the text. It was because she could say "the *Lord* killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The *Lord* maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the *Lord's*, and he hath set the world upon them."* See the encouragement it affords to a *tempted believer*. How greatly was Paul strengthened and refreshed by an assurance from Him who hath all power in heaven and in earth given into his hands, that "his grace was sufficient for him!" It produced such a blessed effect upon his soul that he rejoiced in the midst of his conflicts, and determined gladly to "glory in his

* 1 Sam. ii. 6—9.

infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him !” * Behold it, once more, in the *salvation of the soul*. How hopeless is the condition of man if left to himself ! How cheerless is the work of a minister, if the success of his mission depend on his own abilities ? Who can give life to the dead ? Who can open the dark prison of the human soul ? Who can turn the stony heart ? Who can cast down every imagination and every high thing that exalts itself, and bring the thoughts of the heart into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ ? Not *man* ; not *human* skill, wisdom, or power. This is the *Lord's* doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ! At *his* command, and by the putting forth of *his* power, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the lost are saved ! Yes ; *he* opens the doors of the prison-house ; and saith to them that are tied and bound with the chains of their sins, “Go forth ; shew yourselves ; I have found a ransom !” Oh ! let all “look to *him*, and you shall be holpen ; let all put your trust in *him*, and you shall not be confounded.” The most needy sinner, as well as the most tempted saint, shall find that he is

* 2 Cor. xii. 7—10.

mighty to save. How many happy souls on earth, and triumphant spirits in glory, can "look unto the rock from whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence they were digged," and magnify and adore the God of our salvation! May *you*, dear hearers or readers, be added to the number, and praise his name for ever and ever!—And lastly, let us behold it,

5. As a *most invigorating and establishing doctrine*. None can rightly view the Lord but they who truly know him. This is the peculiar privilege of that church which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself. When that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness is pleased to shine into the heart, we then see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and *then* we can say, "this God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our guide unto death."* But the church of God here is a church *militant*—in a state of warfare, conflict, and trial. Where is our refuge? where is our hope? where is our safety? "Surely shall one say, in the *Lord* have I righteousness and strength. In the *Lord* shall all the

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.”* *Why*, then, though this bush burn with fire, is it not consumed? Because “the Lord is there!”† *Why*, though continually assaulted, do the gates of hell never prevail? Because “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.”‡ Times there are, and times there will be, when the strongest faith will be staggered, and unbelief will rise up and darken the bright prospects of gospel hope, both in respect of our present condition and future end. The hands will hang down, the knees become feeble, and the heart wax faint; and we may be tempted to give up all as lost, and lie down in despair. But, oh, let the great truth of my text break in upon the soul, and every cloud will be dispersed, and every fear will vanish away. Is such the case with *you*? Are any of God’s dear children *here* in this condition? Do you tremble for the *ark of God*? Do you tremble for *your own state*? Oh! let the gracious message of your God cheer your heart and refresh and

* Is. xlv. 24, 25.

† Ex. iii. 4.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19; Matt. xvi. 18.

strengthen your soul. "*Why* sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not *known*, hast thou not *heard*, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.* "Happy, then, art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thine help, and the sword of thine excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."† Oh! may the church of God, amidst all her various dispersions, and pressing emergencies, be enabled, even now, to join that "great multitude, whose voice is as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunder-

* Is. xl. 27—31.

† Deut. xxxiii. 29.

ings," saying, "*Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!*"* And may each one of the Lord's redeemed finish his earthly course, like David in the text; go down into the dark valley of death leaning on the Beloved; and come forth again in the last great day of final conquest and triumph, with this adoring confession—"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."

* Rev. xix. 6.

SERMON IV.

THE UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN.

EZEKIEL, XVIII. 4.

“ Behold, all souls are mine ; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine ; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

NEXT to the true knowledge of the ever-blessed God, and especially as possessed of supreme dominion and authority over all creatures, and reconciled in his son Jesus Christ, which is the foundation of all acceptable godliness, is the necessity of a right estimate of our own character and condition ; and the various responsibilities under which we stand in respect of Him from whom we receive our being and all our powers ; to whom we owe their allegiance ; and by whose just sentence we must abide for ever. Indeed, the one so necessarily springs out from the other, that we can by no means admit of their sepa-

ration. Even the heathen, although they never understood the lesson they inculcated, enforced the maxim, *γινώθι σεαυτόν*,* *Know thyself*. Nor need we be surprised at their failure. Destitute of the one source of heavenly wisdom, and guided only by dim reason in the exercise of their native abilities, as by such means they never reached the true knowledge of God, so could they never attain even the real meaning of that axiom, whose reasonableness and necessity were, notwithstanding, apparent to all.

The case, however, is different with ourselves. We have every means, and every advantage, for becoming acquainted with the things which belong to our peace. And although there are numbers, of every class and description, who appear to be divested of all regard for these things, and others exceedingly misinformed respecting them, that only serves to shew how needful it is such truths should be more frequently stated, and more distinctly enforced, in order that all may be duly influenced by those fundamental principles which so few seem really to understand and practise.

Where this doctrine of self-knowledge is un-

* The saying of Solon, one of the seven wise men of Greece.

known or disregarded, how can men be duly affected by the discovery of their condition, or stirred up to act according to the claims under which they stand, or seek to escape the danger to which they are exposed? It cannot be. Unless, for instance, it be seen and acknowledged that we are all bound to love God and man, as his creatures,—are liable to his indignation and wrath, as sinners,—have no hope but that which is provided in the gospel of Jesus Christ of being delivered—and no time for the attainment of that blessing, beyond what the present life affords,—what obedience or care can be rendered to either as an evident duty? or what alarm will be felt on account of the consequences of a failure? or what anxiety will be manifested for an interest in the mercy provided? or what diligent employment will there be of the present time, so rapidly passing away, in seeking that salvation without which the end must be equally fatal and tremendous? It is evident there can be none; and the consequence must necessarily be, that men will live in a course of self-will, or self-guidance; or, in other words, in a state of careless indifference or hardened unconcern.

Might not this serve to account for what we

every day see and behold? Are there not numbers who are everywhere living in this manner,—not merely of this or that class in particular, but of all classes, and all descriptions, from the hand that wields the sceptre in the government of nations, down to the arm that holds the common spade in delving the earth? Can such universal impiety spring from accident or chance? Assuredly not. Let it be allowed that man is a fallen, polluted being, or not, one thing is certain; where such irreverence exists, the obligations of the creature cannot be acknowledged; or, if admitted by a bare confession, they cannot be felt; and, in either case, we may not well be furnished with a more decisive evidence of the solemn sentence of Heaven—that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

These remarks do not extend to the root of the matter; they merely glance at that which must be evident to all. Their larger consideration is intended to embrace the future bearings of this discourse. The words of the text will serve as an introduction to the subject, and embrace the general substance of the whole.

The prophet, in this chapter, is addressing himself to the wicked, perverse, and rebellious

house of Israel. Chargeable with the most flagrant enormities, both in respect of their national transgressions and individual sins, and suffering under the just displeasure of God on account of them, they yet threw the blame on him, and impugned his dealings with them as being imbued with the deep stain of injustice; and this they considered as a sufficient excuse for their present murmurings and guilt. The wicked sentence was become proverbial. Israel had adopted its use, and pleaded its justification. "The *fathers*, said they, have eaten sour grapes, and the *children's* teeth are set on edge,"—that is, they did not consider that they had provoked God by *their own* sins, nor that they were suffering for *their own* iniquities; but wresting a part of the divine law from its proper use,* and not being able to deny the wickedness of their progenitors, they were anxious to persuade themselves, that, although they were suffering calamities due to such sins as their fathers were guilty of, yet they themselves were not in fault, and therefore, were wrongfully punished; and that God was dealing unjustly with them; even although they were walking in their fathers'

* 2nd Com.

steps, and imitating their wicked example. "The way of the Lord, said they, is *not equal*." Such an horrible sentiment as this struck at the very root of the divine prerogative and government. It charged the most holy and righteous God with injustice. It cast such an aspersion upon his character and perfections that divine forbearance itself could no longer refrain. He determines, therefore, to arise to judgment; and, in great mercy to them, and all future nations and generations of the earth, resolves to vindicate the equity of his proceedings and the justice of his works. And while he shews them, that "all souls" are his, and at his disposal,—bound to serve him, and liable to his wrath,—no one shall be able to cast the least slur upon his character; for "he will lay upon none more than is right;" and whether he scourge men in this world, or destroy them in the next, he is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

"What mean ye," says he, "that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the

soul of the son is mine ; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." And then the prophet goes on, in the name of the Lord, to shew the equity and justice of his dealings, by such convincing arguments, and clear illustrations, whilst he still retains the right of his supreme dominion and universal rule, as must for ever silence " every tongue that will dare to rise up in judgment" against him, and evince to all holy and intelligent creatures that " justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne."—" But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, &c. &c. &c., hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly ; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God. If he beget *a son* that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, and that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, &c. &c. &c.—shall *he* then live ? He shall not live : he hath done all these abominations, he shall surely die ; his blood shall be upon him. Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth *not* such like, that hath *not* eaten, &c. &c. &c., he shall not die for the iniquity of his *father*, he shall surely live. As for his *father*,

because he cruelly oppressed, &c. &c.—lo, even *he* shall die in his iniquity. Yet say ye, *Why?* doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, &c. &c. &c., he shall surely live. *The soul that sinneth*, it shall die. The *son* shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the *father* bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, &c. &c. &c.”*

How then could they say, “the way of the Lord is not equal”? Did not the obliquity lie on the other side? Were not *his* ways equal? Was not *their* way unequal? Can we wonder that the Lord, having thus condescended to reason with these guilty rebels, should declare his purity in this manner, as the summary of the whole—“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin”? Now it is evident that the whole force of this vindication of the divine government, and the entire weight of this ex-

* See verses 5—32.

postulation with these beguiled sinners, are embodied in the grand assertion put forth in my text. Because he is *God*, he can do nothing wrong; while at the same time, he has the sovereign claim to everything that is good. Because, therefore, he is *such* a being, and holds *such* a sway, none can sin with impunity against him; and no sentence which he pronounces can ever admit the least contrariety to that which, like his law, is holy, just, and good; whether it apply to one person, or the whole human race,—to a nation, or a single individual,—to this world, or the next,—to time, or eternity. The sovereign voice of the “one Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy,”* is, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

From these words, and the subject thus introduced, we intend to consider, by the divine blessing—

- I. The universal responsibility of man; and,
- II. Some awakening reflections necessarily arising from the doctrine we are about to unfold.

* James, iv. 12.

The subject is of vast importance, and intimately concerns us all. As before observed, a mistaken view or careless indifference about this obligation cannot but be productive of the most lamentable results; while the *fact*, whether attended to or not, still remains the same; and the consequences will be as inevitable as just. "My voice, therefore, is to you, O ye sons of men;" and "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

I. The universal responsibility of man.

Now, in order that we might the more clearly perceive the nature and force of this truth, we must,

1. Offer some explanation of the terms of this proposition.

When we speak of the *responsibility of man*, we mean that tie, or bond, or obligation, or law, (whatever denomination it may assume,) necessarily springing from the relations in which he stands, and the circumstances in which he is placed,—by which he is not only bound to demean himself in a manner answerable to its character, and is liable to all the penalties of failing in the fulfilment of its claims, in respect of his *own* welfare and that of *others*, to whom he belongs as the same species, and with whom he is surrounded and brought into daily contact;

but more especially in reference to the supreme *God*, to whom all his allegiance is directly due, and from whose hands he must finally receive either a gracious approval, or a most fearful sentence of condemnation. This is what we mean by the term *obligation*, or *responsibility*, as applied to man.

Again, when we speak of the *universality* of this responsibility, or obligation, we mean, that it immediately applies both to all individual *persons*, and to all relative or social, or other orderly *circumstances*, by which human beings are connected together, and dependent upon each other; and that in all these relations it is ultimately to be considered in reference to him to whom all must render an account of their talents and abilities at last. Thus it is plain, that all orders and degrees of men, from the highest to the lowest, are under the dominion of this law, and that all ranks and conditions of life are included within its wide embrace.

(i.) If you consider man as a *creature*, the work of God's hand, the law of his responsibility, as such, binds him to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the law

that requires man, as the creature of God, to love his Creator with a full and devoted obedience, and his fellow-beings as himself, for the great Creator's sake. This law, or obligation, never can be suspended, abrogated, or disannulled. Wherever there is a created intelligent existence to be met with—whether an angel in heaven, or man upon earth—on a throne, or in a cottage—a single being, or a vast community, this is the law, “holy, just, and good,” under which he is placed. The very fact that he is the creature of God at once proclaims his responsible relation, and shews its equity and lasting respect. To suppose that a dependent being can ever be released from the obligation of loving the author of his existence, and all who, like himself, are equally accountable to him, is such a monstrous absurdity in itself, so dishonourable to the Lord of heaven and earth, and so contrary to the character and condition of man as the offspring of his creative power and bounty, that it never can be admitted for a single moment by any one who wishes rightly to understand his true position, or desires to act agreeably to its claims. Such a being, could such an one be found, like Noah's dove, might range throughout the wide circle of the creation; but,

amidst the wild and tumultuous waves that would everywhere meet his eye and arrest his progress, he could never find any place of rest for the soles of his feet. His only refuge would be, either to arrogate to himself a power beyond the province of his being—that is, avow himself to be God;—or look forward to annihilation as his ultimate close; for where there is no responsibility to a superior existence, there is no security for preservation or safety. But this may never be; for as the creature can never cease to exist, and therefore never cease to be accountable, so God will never quit his throne, nor, consequently, lay aside the just prerogative of his holy requisitions.

(ii.) If you consider man as a *sinner*, a rebel against the law and the authority of God, his responsibility appears in new and vastly increased proportions. As the *creature* of God, he is bound to love and serve him and all his fellow-beings. As a *sinner* against him, whilst the original obligation still remains in full force, he is now under a new law—that is, his responsibility presents itself in a new light—liable to his indignation, and exposed to his wrath. That “the soul that sinneth shall die,” is as unalterable a law of heaven as that “thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;" and the obligation to suffer for duty omitted, or for sin committed, is as strong and binding as that which demands the most devoted homage and unremitting exercise of love and obedience. Considered in this light, the doctrine of man's responsibility brings him into a very serious and awful condition indeed. Here we behold him doomed to hell, and bound as a guilty creature to suffer the bitter pains of eternal death, as the just wages due to his sins. And what adds to the solemnity of this consideration is, that God is as righteously bound to punish for sin committed, as man is to suffer; by that very law which proclaims the one the maker, and the other the work of his hands. For if God were to permit sin to pass with impunity in any of his creatures, it would argue either that the original law of creation were not good; or that more were enjoined than was meet; or that its observance were indifferent; or that his nature is become changed, and, consequently, that he is now no longer the being to be feared he once was. But such a supposition never can be allowed; for were this once found to be the case, such a licence would be afforded to every kind and degree of impiety, that no limits could be

assigned for the point where it should stop ; and, O dreadful thought ! God himself might be charged with it all ! Man's responsibility, therefore, as certainly extends to the just punishment of sin, as to his equitable duty to love and serve the Lord.

(iii.) The same truth equally applies, although in a still stronger point of view, to the state and condition of man as a sinner, placed *under a dispensation of mercy*. Although he is not thereby released from the responsibility, in either respect, before specified ; yet that obligation runs now in another channel, but in reference to them both. The condition in which he now stands, or the law under which he is now placed, regards the means or method by which he may be delivered from the awful consequences of failing in the performance of the duties previously enjoined ; whilst at the same time that very method has respect to those claims, and honours them all. *Now*, as he values the life of his soul and the favour of God, he is bound to “repent of his sins and believe the gospel ;” he is bound to confess his guilt, and “flee for refuge to lay hold of the blessed hope set before him ;” he is bound to “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” and to “give all diligence to make his calling

and election sure." Such is the nature of this obligation, and the power of this responsibility, that it is at the peril of his soul if he spend another hour in sin, or waste another moment in forgetfulness of God, or neglect of the blessed Redeemer. Nay, to such an extent ought it to be carried, and such a supreme dominion should it possess, that he must not only "give the more earnest heed to the things which he hears, lest at any time he should let them slip;" but take care above all things, that he neither disregard the remedy which God has provided—the mediation of Jesus Christ—nor cherish a single hope, arising from any consideration whatsoever, contrary to the Saviour's love, or disparaging to the grace and glory of his salvation. In all these respects the obligation is as binding as in any of the former, and even vastly increased. If the sinner repent not of his sins, he shall perish. If he believe not in Christ, he shall die in his sins. If he believe not the gospel, he shall be damned. In either case, the law of his responsibility is clear and binding; and as nothing can release the sinner, so circumstanced, from the necessity of attending to it; so nothing can avert the consequences arising from either procedure. For as "the wages of sin is death," so he that is not

saved from his sins, must suffer the penalty due to them ; and as “ there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ, so he that does not come to, and receive, and believe in, that Saviour, must perish for ever, according to his deserts ; while, on the other hand, it is equally clear, that he who *does* repent of his sins, and *does* flee to that Saviour, shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life. The law of man’s responsibility, which enforces the one, does also ensure the other. We are not now shewing *how* this is to be done, but *why* it should take place. We all know that it is “ by *grace* we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God ; not of works, lest any man should boast ;” but at the same time we ought also to know *why* it is we should prize that grace, and *what* it is that shews how greatly we stand in need of it. Man, therefore, as a sinner, under a dispensation of mercy, is bound, at the peril of his soul, to repent and believe the gospel.

(iv.) Again, if you consider man as a *happy believer in Christ*, pardoned and accepted in the beloved, brought nigh to God, washed in the Saviour’s blood, and clothed with his perfect

righteousness, you must still regard him in a responsible condition ; not merely as a creature bound to love and serve the Lord and his fellow-beings, though grievously failing in his duty ; nor merely as a sinner, under the curse of the violated law, and the wrath of the Almighty, due to his sins ; nor merely as a sinner, under a dispensation of mercy, and bound, at the peril of his soul, to repent and believe the gospel ;—but as a dear child of God in the faith of Jesus Christ, released from the guilt and condemnation of all his former crimes, and now engaged in a new and higher manner to bless and adore the God of his salvation ; while the very mercy he has received not only lays him under the fresh claims of gratitude and love, but evinces the equity of his previous obligations, and honours and fulfils them all ! This is the great glory of the gospel salvation, the grand climax of all penal obligations fulfilled, and the blessed source of all grace and salvation bestowed ! *Out* of Christ, sin reigns over the whole guilty race of man unto *death* ; but *in* him, and to all that truly believe in his name, “ grace reigns through righteousness unto *eternal life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Now

* Rom. vi. 23.

the sweet language of love is, "thy sins are forgiven thee; go, and sin no more."* Now the soft cords that bind the redeemed saint to the horns of the altar are, "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."† And now it is the happy, believing, justified sinner, having come to Christ for rest to his soul, finds that his yoke is easy, and his burden light.‡ Now he neither works *for life*, nor in the *fear of death*; but his obedience is willing, loving, and cheerful, springing *from life received, and salvation secured*; and he goes on his way rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

(v.) Or if you advance a step further, and consider man as a *glorified saint in heaven*, there the obligation rises to the highest pitch, is perfectly rendered, and will be so for ever. And observe the process through which it is attained. The original law is not laid aside; the liabilities

* John, viii. 11.

† Rom. xii. 1, 2.

‡ Matt. xi. 30.

of punishment, arising from its failure, are not winked at, or heedlessly passed over; the order and means by which the one might be honoured and the other avoided, are not cast away as of no worth or no avail. No. All is beautiful, consistent, harmonious, and glorious. Every penalty is here paid, and every claim is here fulfilled. To see the blessed God thus honoured and exalted; and to behold the sinner, through the Saviour's undertaking, bathed in penitential sorrow (without merit), looking to the Saviour's cross for pardon and peace, and accepted in God's beloved Son, in whom all merit resides, and out of whose fulness all mercies flow; and thus "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and ultimately raised to endless life and peace; is one of the most glorious spectacles that earth or heaven can present to our view, which, next to our matchless God and Saviour, will call forth the praise and adoration of the heavenly hosts for ever and ever!

(vi.) Or yet again, once more, if you look down into *the depths of the burning lake*, and see the devil and his angels, and the wicked, and all

the nations that forget God, turned into hell, and suffering together the vengeance of eternal fire, you there behold the creature's obligations exhibited in the most awful and tremendous manner. *Why* were the former hurled from their thrones, and reserved, under those chains of darkness, not only unto the judgment of the great day, but for ever? They are created spirits accountable to God; and, having forfeited his favour in proud rebellion against him, according to the law of their responsible existence and the irreversible decisions of his supreme dominion and vast authority, they are made perpetual sacrifices to his justice, salted with the fire of his wrath, in which they will be tormented, though not consumed, for ever! *Why*, again, are the latter cast into the same place, and made partakers of the same punishment? They also are creatures accountable to God; and although they are not equal to them in the dignity of their original formation, yet, far surpassing them in sins multiplied, and mercies slighted, which the devils never had the possibility of gaining, they have incurred an equal, if not greater, condemnation; and therefore the just sentence of the God of heaven and earth consigns them to the same place, and dooms

them together to the same torments for ever and ever! But in all this we see nothing more than the doctrine of our text—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die,"—carried out to its proper extent in the ultimate execution of that sentence which is the legitimate wages of sin.

SERMON V.

THE SAME CONTINUED IN FURTHER DETAIL.

EZEKIEL, XVIII. 4.

“ Behold, all souls are mine ; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine ; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

BUT we must not be satisfied with this *general* view of the doctrine before us ; we must also consider it,

2. In its expansive nature and particular detail.

Every soul of man comes under the influence of this law. None can be exempted from its boundless sway. Like the great and glorious God, in his supreme dominion and universal authority reigning over all, this truth universally extends to all,—takes the whole family of man, in all its various sections and gradations, within its wide embrace,—lays its unalterable claims

upon every human being,—and stands as intimately connected with our present circumstances and future end, as our breath is with the body, or as our flesh cleaves to the bones. It behoves all, therefore, seriously to weigh this matter in the balances of the sanctuary, putting themselves in their various conditions and distinct relations, in the one scale, and the word of unerring truth in the other; and then inquire how the case may stand between you and God. There can be no doubt as to what the result will be, if it please the Lord to give you wisdom and grace to see and know yourselves. To appreciate, therefore, this subject as it ought, we must consider it in reference,

(i.) To our *individual character*. The doctrine of which we now speak applies to all classes and to all people. Every person throughout the whole earth, whether high or low, or rich or poor, comes within the sphere of its influence. You cannot point to a single being, however exalted, or however humble, who does not stand in this responsible condition. The glittering crown and royal robe as well invest the man that must give an account of himself to God, as the broken rags of the needy beggar. Even the very heathens are not released from

the power of this law; "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."* And if "*without excuse*," then are they all responsible to God. Nor does this accountability merely concern men's own individual *persons*, in whatever condition they may be placed; but it claims the right use and improvement of all that we *are* and *possess*, and demands the whole to be devoted to the praise and glory of God. Every man is answerable for the use or misuse of his *time*; for the neglect of his *soul*; the employment of his *talents*, or *abilities*; the manner in which he disposes of his *possessions* or *influence*; he must give an account of his *words* and *actions*; nay, the very *thoughts* of his *heart* are all open to the divine inspection, and subject to the divine approval or displeasure. No man can say, "Who is Lord over me?" As God reigns supreme over all, so has he an undoubted right to claim the allegiance of all.

* Rom. i. 19, 20.

Nay, every faculty of the mind, as well as member of the body, is to be devoted to his service and dedicated to his glory; whether that employment may refer immediately to the welfare of others; or be directed at once to himself. Our *eyes*, as inlets to the soul, should contemplate and gaze upon his works, and look around for proper objects on which to fix our devoted regard. Our *ears* should listen, not to the alluring voice of sin and pleasure, but to the truths of his word, and the messages of his mercy and love. Our *mouth* should be opened wide in the largest supplications for his bounty. Our *tongue* should utter forth his praises. Nay, our very *hands* should learn to handle the word of life, and be stretched forth in his service; our *feet* should carry us in the way in which we ought to go; and *all* the members of the body, obeying the dictates of the higher powers of the soul, should be yielded to him as “servants of righteousness unto holiness.”* And that too, not merely as it concerns this or that person in particular, but all—all everywhere—of all ranks and all conditions. None are exempt from this responsibility; none are freed from this control.

* Rom. vi. 19.

And who will say that we are not answerable to God for the observance of this law; and liable to his displeasure for its violation or neglect? Let such a being, if such an one can be found, stand forth, and, in the face of heaven, proclaim his vast impiety, if he dare; that we may see and mark the creature that will thus cast off his allegiance to his Maker, and trample the very law of his existence under his feet! In like manner this responsibility extends also to all the *advantages* we individually enjoy, and all the personal *dealings* of God with us. Are you possessed of the word of life? Have you the means of grace? Do the glad tidings of the gospel sound in your ears? Is the way of life and salvation put before you? Hath God prospered you in your undertakings, or thwarted you in your designs? Hath he blessed you with health, or visited you with affliction? Do you meet with kind friends, or deliverance from open enemies? Are prospects of usefulness, or opportunities of doing good, put before you? Are you in your early days, the prime of youth, the vigour of manhood, or in the decline of life? Does your head rest on the downy pillow, or on the bed of dust or chaff? Do you sit from day to day at the full table, or the scanty board?

Well, remember, wherever you are—whatever you have—in either or all of these respects, you are answerable to God for the use of the whole. This law of your creation lies in full force upon you, and God has the sovereign claim for the just service of all. Nor can you ever lay this obligation aside, or place yourselves beyond its reach. You may as vainly attempt to strip the heavens of their glory, or cast down Jehovah from his throne, as force yourselves into the persuasion, that the law of your responsible condition can ever lessen its force, or that the most high and mighty God may ever abate or forego its demands.

(ii.) *In its relative extent.* The truth thus individually considered assumes a wider dominion in its social and relative claims. It would be a difficult task to find a being among all the orders of the universe of creatures, especially among men, whose duties and responsibilities were exclusively confined to *himself*. The all-wise God hath been pleased to ordain a different course of things ; and, by the mutual dependence of one upon another, to promote the benefit, and consequently the obligations, of all. The framework and order of society are beautiful and harmonious. Like the complicated works of a vast

machine, every part not only depends on the other, but conduces to the stability of the whole. In this respect the *various relations of life*, and the different grades and degrees of station and rank in the constitution of a nation, or dominion of an empire, are not to be regarded as an accidental contingency, crafty invention, or proud usurpation, but as a wise and benevolent appointment for the common good. How tender and binding is the union of husband and wife ! How strong and forcible are the yearnings of parental affection ! How sweet the overflowings of brotherly love ! How close the cords that bind friends to each other's bosom, and impel them to watch over each other's welfare ! In like manner, how useful and necessary is the connexion between master and servant ! In the exercise of a mutual dependence, each reciprocally promotes the comfort, or provides for the support, of the other. Both are equally dependent, both are equally linked together. Extend the subject further ; see how the operations of *commerce* are carried on, and how provision is made for our continually recurring wants and pressing emergencies. All cannot be sellers ; some must be buyers. Consumption must prevail. Hence, according to the amount of popu-

lation and the wants springing from the various combinations of human existence, grows the whole machinery of business and trade; and the labour and productions of some supply the necessities of others, whether confined to a single district, city, or kingdom, or extended to the different nations of the earth. Again, when we consider how needful it is that peace and harmony, and equity and justice, should prevail, and call to mind the depraved nature and turbulent dispositions of men, and reflect how ready they are, either through temptation or design, to take advantage of each other's necessity, and put forth the hand of violence or fraud,—how becoming, how salutary, is the enactment of *just laws* to punish the evil and protect the good; and how requisite is it that these laws, in every section of the land, should be committed to able and upright men, for impartial execution, whether we consider them as vested in royal hands, the occupant of the wool-sack, the assize chair, or the seat of the ordinary magistrates' meeting! Nor must we forget to notice, when we recollect our liability to the inroads or invasion of hostile enemies, and the confusion and disorder which wicked and designing men might create in our domestic harmony by factious and treasonable

practices, how proper and wholesome are the existence and order of *good government* ; that provision should be made for the security and peace of the realm ; and that “ the powers that be ” for that purpose should neither be despised nor resisted, but obeyed, and upheld as an ordinance of God ! Nor by any means must we pass over the consideration,—when we call to mind the immortal character of man, the value of his soul, the certainty of death and judgment, and his eternal destiny in the world to come, either in heaven or hell, his being a sinner helpless and undone, the provision of the Saviour without whom he must perish, and the necessity there is that he should have an unerring rule, for the direction of his steps and the guidance of his hopes,—how wise, how merciful, how gracious, is the grant of the *sacred oracles*, and the institution of an *order of men* whose business and delight should be to proclaim the great truths of that word, and direct their fellow-beings in the way of life ; and how reasonable, as well as imperious, is the duty of all to hearken to the voice of God ; and learn the things which concern their peace ! In all this we see and admire, not the mere, fickle, or random appointment of man, but the wise, good, and merciful ordination

of the sovereign God. But it must not be forgotten—and the very fact that such a provision and regulation exist shews the equity and force of the remark—that this law of human responsibility enters into all these various orders and relations of society, and pervades, and sways over, the whole. The individual who is accountable unto God, is not divested of that liability when he becomes a husband or wife, a parent or child, a brother or sister, a neighbour or friend, a master or servant; nor is the buyer or seller; nor the magistrate or people; nor the prince, ruler, or subject; nor the prelate, pastor, or flock. Nay, the very reverse is the fact; the obligation of each rises higher and higher, and extends further and further, in proportion as advantages multiply and influence spreads. The doctrine of human responsibility, which, in its prime capacity, so to speak, is no bigger than a little stream, or a small drop, (though sufficient even then to sink the guilty soul, that disregards its voice, into the lowest hell,) opens, in this extended view of its complex course, through all the orders and gradations of men, till it swells into such a mighty flood as to bear down everything before it, and is enough to sweep the whole world, or ten thousand worlds, failing in its

claims, into utter, irretrievable, and everlasting destruction; and, without any distinction of sceptres, thrones, or kingdoms, in the just judgment of God, to overwhelm and destroy them all! How guilty the parent that neglects his family! How tremendous the condemnation of the pastor that destroys the souls of his flock; or the prince or ruler that abuses his power, and neglects the welfare of the realm! How fearful the doom of the sinner that slights the voice of Him who alone is mighty to save! And where can you fix the bounds of that law which follows man wherever he goes, fixes its hold upon him wherever he is found, and brings in the whole machinery of society, in all its various sections, accountable to God for the use or abuse of the several relations, stations, influence, dependence, or authority, which they mutually possess? And this leads us to consider it,

(iii.) *In its aggregate amount.* But who can calculate this amount, or reckon up the untold liabilities of the creature, as they congregate together in the relative positions in which he stands, or the social gradations with which he is invested? Viewed through the medium of the clear glass of truth, the doctrine we discuss opens to the mind in such vast proportions on

every side around, and gathers its multiplied forces in such majestic array, that, while we stand amazed at its grandeur and greatness, we are equally confounded at its near approach to ourselves ; and we tremble under the conscious sense both of guilt and danger, when we feel its mighty hand laid upon our own head, and hear its tremendous voice proclaiming, "*thou art the man !*" Nor can anything more clearly evince the necessity of there being a Supreme Governor of the world, a final day of account, and an irreversible doom passed upon all, either in mercy or wrath, or the equity, holiness, and justice of such a proceeding, than the very law of man's responsibility which we are now considering, as springing in the nature of things from the supreme dominion and sovereign authority of God. Sin, in all its various ramifications, is the consequence of the violation of this law ; and the wages of that sin is death. Nay, every claim put forth upon the creature, and every tribute demanded at his hands, whether we view him in his individual capacity, or endued with his social and relative powers, originates from the principle, that man is bound to honour and glorify his Maker and Redeemer ; and this principle itself flows from his relation to the throne of God on

high. Who, then, we ask again, can calculate these liabilities, or reckon up all these claims? Who can estimate the number of failures, or tell the sum total of the crimes and transgressions which God may lay to our charge? Oh! if this truth were once effectually opened upon men's minds, it would make them one and all to say, each for himself—"Woe is me, for I am undone! My transgressions are more in number than the hairs of my head; they are grown up into the heavens." With such a truth as this before us, none could talk of sins being few or small. Nor, till the doctrine of human responsibility be clearly understood, will men ever truly know themselves, or set a proper regard upon that mercy which they so greatly need. Calculation fails in the estimate of this amount. Could all the drops that fall from the skies, or all the grains of sand that lie on the sea-shore, or all the stars spread over the canopy of heaven, or all the leaves in autumn's wane that drop from the trees, or all the blades of corn and grass that spring up on the surface of the vegetable earth, or all the forest beasts of prey, or all the fowls of the air, and fishes of the sea, and insects and reptiles that swarm in the atmosphere or occupy the regions below, be reckoned up and told, *then* may some

faint idea be entertained, and some feeble conception formed, of the real position of man as a sinner before God, the charges which God has to allege against him, what the eye of the Omniscient sees already recorded, and the final day of reckoning will bring to light, as written down in the exact and impartial book of his remembrance,—unless previously blotted out, in the day of grace, through the Redeemer's blood and righteousness !

Hence, in the word of unerring truth, all orders, and all degrees of men, are addressed as coming within the sphere of this great law. Hence, to a *nation*, as well as to an individual, in all its various sections and degrees, it is said, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it; That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged," &c. &c.* And the *consequences* of such national obedience or disobedi-

* Deut. vi. 1, 2.

ence are thus distinctly pointed out by the same hand:—"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these *blessings* shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord, &c. &c. But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day, that all these *curse*s shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord, &c. &c. &c."* All this shall come to pass when a nation or people shall not "fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God."†

Hence, again, in speaking of the various obligations and duties which are binding upon *all orders of men*, from the highest to the lowest, the Lord says, "It is not for *kings*, O Lemuel, it is not for *kings* to drink wine, nor for *princes* strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted."‡ "He that ruleth over men must be *just*, ruling in the *fear of God*."§ And when the Lord would rouse up such characters to a sense both of their duty and danger, he proclaims, "Say unto the *king* and to the *queen*, humble yourselves, sit down; for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory."|| In like manner, "*judges* and *officers* shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with *just* judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not

* Deut. xxviii. 1—14, and 15—68.

† v. 58.

‡ Prov. xxxi. 4, 5. § 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. || Jer. xiii. 18.

respect persons, neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord giveth thee.”* And in order to secure this impartial administration of justice, they were commanded to “provide out of all the people, able men, such as *fear God*, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens; and let them judge the people at all seasons,” &c. &c.† So, again, with respect to the *government* of nations, and the *obedience* due to the laws and regulations of kingdoms—all is to be ordered in the fear of God. “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the

* Deut. xvi. 18—20.

† Ex. xviii. 21, 22.

same," &c. &c.* If rulers, therefore, are bound to *govern* in the fear of God; subjects are equally bound, by the same principle, to *honour* and *obey*. And in respect of either, as in the case of Saul, "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."† Upon the same principles, and under the same responsibilities, are *business and trade* to be conducted, whether between man and man, or nation and nation. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the Lord your God."‡ And in crying out against the *fraud* and *dishonesty* of those who impose on and cheat their neighbours by swerving from these equitable regulations, the Lord asks, "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is

* Rom. xiii. 1—8.

† 1 Sam. xv. 23.

‡ Lev. xix. 35, 36.

deceitful in their mouth: therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins."* And who can depict the vast responsibilities, or the awful guilt, of wicked *pastors* and *people*? "Woe be to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord!"† "If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."‡ Nor does the manner in which *patrons* generally dispose of their pastoral appointments screen them from their liabilities to this law, but rather increase their condemnation ten thousand fold. The way in which Jeroboam appointed even his idolatrous priests became a sin to his house, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.§ How many imitate that wicked man, incur a greater guilt, and provoke a heavier curse! If you descend still lower in the scale of relative and social life, you will find

* Mic. vi. 10—13.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 9.

‡ Jer. xxiii. 1.

§ 1 Kings, xiii. 34.

that "*wives* are to submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord,"—that "*husbands* are to love their wives even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it,"—that "*children* are to obey their parents in the Lord ; for this is right,"—that "*fathers* (and *mothers*) are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—that "*servants* are to be obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart as unto Christ,"—that "*masters* are to do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven."* In short, the plain and positive rule of this universal responsibility is, "Render therefore to *all* their dues ; honour to whom honour,"—"to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."†

(iv.) And can anything be more *lovely* and *beautiful* in itself, or more *equitable*, *reasonable*, and *holy*, in its obligations and claims, than the systematic proportions of such an order and constitution of things as we thus behold ? Here is nothing redundant ; nothing unnecessary ; no-

* Eph. v, 22, 23, and vi. 1—9.

† Rom. xiii. 7, and Matt. xxii. 21.

thing unfit; nothing that does not conduce to our mutual benefit and advance the general welfare! In the body national and politic, as in the body spiritual and ecclesiastic, God hath set the members every one of them as it hath pleased him. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you;—but God hath tempered the body together,—that there should be no schism on the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.* How wise, how benevolent, how good is this appointment! And it is not *right*, then, that men should stand mutually responsible one to the other, and especially to God, our sovereign maker and great disposer? Is it not *right* that, in whatever position we are placed in this great framework of the body of human society, we should love and seek the good of each other, and honour and obey the ever-blessed God? Is it not *right* that our faculties and members in our own individual capacity, and all our talents and influence in our respective gradations, from the cottage up to the throne, should be engaged in the discharge of this great duty, that, while man

1 Cor. xii. 12—31.

is to be loved, God is to be honoured above all? What confusion and disorder must ensue upon the departure from this rule, and the neglect or violation of this law? Such an infraction of the great law of man's universal responsibility, at whosoever's door it may lie, involves a principle of rebellion, and incurs a heavy load of guilt, which no mortal man can describe either in its malignity or desert; and woe be to him on whose head it shall rest, and at whose hands it will be ultimately required! And is it not *right*, then, that man being thus constituted and thus responsible, God should hold him answerable for all his ways and works, and guilty for all his sins? And if those sins are not pardoned and forgiven, by whatever means he may be pleased to appoint, (which in this case none can be ignorant of—the blood of Jesus,) will it not be an equal act of holiness and justice, at last, to permit the laws of his kingdom to take their full course upon those who have disregarded that obligation, and, above all, slighted that gracious remedy? What should we say of an earthly prince who fostered the traitors, the thieves, and murderers, of his realm,—admitted them into his presence, and loaded them with honours? Would not all good men shudder at

the spectacle, and mourn over such lawless impunity? What, then, might be said of the ever-blessed God, if *he* were to act in a manner which all holy, devoted, creatures would grieve and weep to behold? The mind staggers at the thought, and trembles at the consequences to which it would lead. But, oh! let no man be deceived; God is not to be thus mocked. We are aware that great laxity of principle (if principle it can be called) prevails among many respecting these things at this day. We are aware that the very opposite to the line of argument adopted in this discourse, sways in the councils of princes, and rules in the breasts of the vulgar and profane. We know the general sentiment is, that *man* rules, and *God* is to be disregarded,—that power belongeth unto *man*, and not unto *God*,—that the voice of the *people*, and not of the *heavens*, is the voice of God, &c. &c. But whatever may be the upshot of this struggle now, there is a day coming when all will be set right,—when God will vindicate the claims of his government,—when proud dust and ashes shall be forced at length to take their true position, and the poor worms of the earth constrained to own the supremacy of his dominion, and confess their own liability to him for

the position they held, and the part which they acted in all their ways and works. Yes, there is a day coming when "small and great shall stand before God;" when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and say, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"*

* Rev. vi. 12—17, and xx. 11—15.

SERMON VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED AND IMPROVED.

EZEKIEL, XVIII. 4.

“ Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

SUCH is the faint outline of the great doctrine of man's universally responsible condition, as the intelligent creature of God, which we proposed for our dispassionate inquiry at the commencement of the subject. Being led to this point, let us now proceed to notice—

II. Some awakening reflections necessarily arising from the matter brought under our review.

Who can cast his eye over the truth thus opened and enforced, and not see—

1. How needful it is that every person should

seek to be *thoroughly grounded* in the doctrine of man's universal responsibility !

Can any person possess a right estimate of his true character and condition, unless this be the case ? Can any person ever be properly impressed with a sense of the duties which he is bound to perform, or the danger to which he is exposed for their neglect, if he do not clearly and distinctly perceive the obligations under which he is placed, and understand his liability to God for their observance or violation ? On the contrary, must not the knowledge and persuasion of this grand truth have a powerful effect upon men's hearts and ways, either as a guide for the performance of duty, or as a check in the commission of sin,—a light for the discovery of danger incurred, or a spur to urge on the mind in the pursuit of an adequate remedy ? Or can the influence of this truth, if universally seen and confessed, as it ought, be confined to a single bosom or a single station, whether relative or social ? Must it not carry its powerful operation, as the case may require, and especially if backed by the invisible energy of the Spirit and love of God, throughout all classes and all degrees, and cause all, more or less, to feel the dominion of its mighty rule ? Would it not

instruct the ignorant, rouse the thoughtless, confound the impious, alarm the guilty? Would it not lead men to view themselves in a new and different position,—not as isolated beings, caring for none but themselves, or never even bestowing a thought upon their state and character in the sight of God; but as linked to their fellow-creatures by a law which cannot be dispensed with, and bound by the same law, not only to love them, but, in so doing, and above all, to love, honour, and obey, the ever-blessed God? Should we behold such reckless indifference, such arrogant presumption, such selfish idolatry, such betrayal of trust, such neglect or abuse of power and authority, as we now everywhere witness, if all orders and degrees of men were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of this law? Or could ever such quackery of remedy and device be so fondly cherished, or so widely prevail both in our individual concerns and national policy, if this truth were clearly seen in its undoubted claims, and faithfully observed in its binding operations? Once duly and deeply impressed on the mind, would it not abide there, and, like a never-failing spring, send forth its salutary streams, on every side, to irrigate and fructify the rational and accountable earth? Would

such a thought ever arise, or such a sentiment ever be uttered, in answer to the question, "Where is Abel, thy brother? I know not! Am *I* my brother's keeper?"—if this law were acknowledged in its full dominion, or prevailed in all its powerful appeals? Nay, more; can any person ever cherish a right feeling towards himself, in his own individual capacity,—or perform a right action towards others, in his social or relative station,—or speak a right word, or perform an acceptable deed towards God, unless the law of his responsibility be fixed at the root, and pervade the whole? It seems as if, in this respect, the whole world were turned upside down, and "all the foundations of the earth were out of course." *Why* are so many ready to say, "Who is Lord over me?" *Why* is there such an evident indifference concerning relative, social, or personal duties, which even instinct in the beasts of the earth impels them to discharge? *Why* do we behold such disobedience of children towards their parents, and such indifference of parents towards their children? *Why* are servants so unfaithful towards their masters, and they again, on the contrary so regardless of their servants' welfare? *Why* exist such constant bickerings in families,

and husbands and wives know so little of the sweet influence of conjugal ties and felicity? Look at the rich, wealthy, and great; *why* do they live in such pleasure, wax wanton, and nourish themselves for the day of slaughter? Look at the poor; *why* such dishonesty among some, such thievish practices, and such murmuring and discontent among others? *Why* are there so many engaged in the work of God from the least to the greatest (with sorrow be it spoken) indifferent to the souls of their charge,—more intent upon the growth of the fleece, and the pleasures of the world, than the welfare of the flock,—blind leaders of the blind, and both falling into the ditch, and yet thinking no harm is done, nor dreaming of danger incurred? And *why* such numbers of the people “loving to have it so;” or, if favoured with better opportunities and greater privileges, hating the light, and not coming to the light, lest their deeds should be reprovèd? Or, if you advance a step higher, *why* is “the cause of the widow and the fatherless” so frequently disregarded, while the wealthy and great obtain an easy access to the voice of relief? *Why*, in the administration of justice, is the mere whisper of power often entertained, while the loud cries of the needy and

destitute are overlooked? *Why* is it that silver and gold are found to unlock the pleader's lips, and draw forth the torrents of his eloquence, flowing in proportion to the scores or hundreds he receives, when at the same time not a word will be spoken, nor a muscle moved, at the presentation of a plea which, however equitable and just, is not invested with such captivating prepossessions? *Why!* MAMMON RULES! and "truth is fallen in our streets!" *Why*, again, we would ask, have kings and princes such little regard for a nation's welfare,—thinking more of splendid palaces and festive tables than devising means of promoting peace and godliness? And *why* are nobles and senators so intent upon the aggrandizement of their houses and families, nestling their parties, and aiming to climb to the highest pre-eminence,—grasping at their annual thousands, and lolling away their idle hours in some official chair or rural retreat, while the honest and industrious labour for the supply in the sweat of their brow? And *why*, again, among the various orders of business and trade, are such deception and fraud so prevalent and common,—the overcharged price—the inferior article—the scant measure—and the short weight? And again, on the contrary, *why* such

dishonesty and cheating among their customers, living beyond their income for the sake of appearances in the world, purchasing what they never intend to pay for, ruining their families, bringing themselves to penury, and at length terminating their career by an ignominious banishment, voluntary or legal, or contriving to hold up their heads in a degraded position through bankrupt relief, by such a composition of principle as justice and integrity would blush to admit? The true answer to all these questions is, *the law of man's universal responsibility is not acknowledged, or not permitted to exercise its rightful sway.* Not deeming themselves accountable to God in their intercourse with each other, of course there can be no tie to bind them to duty, nor to draw them from sin. And hence the laws of man, as such, are utterly unavailing for the end they propose. Men must act from higher principles, and lay a deeper foundation, to secure the growth of truth and the spread of equity and peace. If the doctrine of human responsibility rest not at the foundation of man's actions, as a creature accountable to God in every possible condition in which he may be placed, he is like a horse without bit or bridle, or like a wheel propelled from the top of a hill,

running his fatal career at a rapid rate, without the least impediment, beyond the fear of loss or regard to character, to check his progress, which the smallest gust of temptation, ease, pleasure, or self-gratification, will either sweep away or lay even with the dust ! And is it not necessary, then, that every person should seek to *understand* the great law of his responsibility, and aim to conform to its sovereign sway ? Is it not necessary that every person, from the king or queen down to the poor man, should well remember and be firmly assured of the awakening truth in my text, as coming from the mouth of God—" Behold, all souls are mine ; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine ; and the soul that sinneth, it shall die " ? How is it possible that men can know themselves, or see what is required at their hands, if the case be not so ? Nor let it be thought that this is a difficult acquisition. The principle of this law, we admit, may be shut up in a nutshell. Its application is wide as the world, and vast as the human race. But he that is destitute of this wisdom has yet to learn what is the first element of his being ; what is the great law of his intercourse with others ; and what it is that will bring him before God at last in the day of judg-

ment. Man is accountable to God, and therefore he must stand before him to receive the just sentence of his lips, which will fix his doom for ever.

2. What a clear ground for *universal conviction and condemnation* !

Who hath conformed to the dictates of this law? *Who* hath yielded his just tribute of equitable observance? *Who* hath hearkened to its voice, and done what it requires? *Who* hath acted from this principle, and held himself accountable to God for all his ways and works? Or, if at times it may have had some influence, or exercised some sway, who hath taken it in the *full* scope of its dominion, yielded an unreserved submission to its voice, and *always* regarded its unalterable requisitions? None! Not one! All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The law of the ten commandments, whether revealed to Adam in innocence, or afterwards more signally promulgated from Sinai, or still more loudly proclaimed from Calvary's mount, dropping from the Saviour's lips, and deeply imbued with his redeeming blood, is but the formal expression of the bond of man's responsibility, reduced to a tangible shape, and carried out in wide and practical

extent. And, we ask, hath this law been obeyed? Hath this law been honoured? Hath this law been fulfilled by any one of God's accountable creatures, in any condition or relation in which he is placed, as it ought? Hath the king on the throne done this, or the people that are scattered over the wide extent of his dominions? Have our princes and nobles, have our statesmen and rulers, have our magistrates and judges, have our prelates, our ministers, and flocks; hath the father or mother, the brother or sister, the neighbour or friend, the buyer or seller, the grower or consumer, the farmer or labourer; hath the young or old, the learned or ignorant, in any office, in any condition, in any relation of life;—have these, have any of these, yielded that obedience to the great law of human responsibility which it universally and unremittingly demands? The question is not, whether you have done this or that as *you thought best*; nor whether you have taken advantage of *circumstances*, been guided by motives of *expediency*, or conformed to the customs or exigences of *the times*. Such a course as this is vicious in its origin, and impious in its fruits. Deem it how you may—an idol of your own imagination, or a bequest transmitted to

your hands as the donation of others, it is clothed in the very essence of rebellion against the ordinance of heaven, and consists, in every possible shape, of a direct infraction of this universal precept. But the real question is, hath *this law* been the spring of your actions and the guide of your steps, and that, too, cheerfully, unreservedly, without diminution, and without end? No other answer can be given to this question, than that this hath *not* been the case; that this hath *not* been done. The consequence is, all stand impeached before God, and all are under the condemnation of this violated law. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," applies as much to one as to another; and to every one who is chargeable with that sin, and liable to that sentence. The glittering crown is no screen from this allegation, nor the royal robe any covering from this danger. Dignity, honour, wealth, fame, talents, abilities, lordly palaces, princely incomes, can neither shield the guilty culprit, nor avert the sentence to which he is exposed. Nor can any inferiority of rank or station elude its piercing eye, or escape its widely-extended arm. It is the law of our *being*; and therefore it will find us out, wherever we are, and whatever we do. Hagar, in

the wilderness, was constrained to say, "Thou, God, seest me;" and David, on the throne, was compelled to acknowledge, "O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me; thou knowest my downsitting, and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts long before; thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways."* And is not this a very serious consideration indeed? Is not this a matter which all ought to lay to heart? All guilty, and all condemned! I, you, and all the rest; my neighbour, my friend, my king or my queen, my country, and my people, all sinners before God—all rebels against the authority of this law—all under the tremendous voice of its holy curse! Oh! that men were wise; that they understood these things; that they would consider their latter end! Is there not a cause? How speaks the Lord to the guilty sinners and guilty nations of the earth?—"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust

* Psalm cxxxix. 1—3; Gen. xvi. 13.

of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.”* Is this all? No. “Behold the day, behold it is come; the morning is gone forth, the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded. Violence is risen up into the rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor any of theirs; neither shall there be wailing for them. The time is come; the day draweth near; let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.”† Does the matter rest here? No. “Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the chil-

* James, v. 1—6.

† Ezek. vii. 10—12, &c.

dren of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots; their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made; and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself; therefore forgive them not.* Do you ask why? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger. The great law which binds man to man in holy brotherhood, and all men to God as the sovereign Lord of all, is broken, is violated, is trodden under foot; and he whose law it is arraigns the whole world at his tribunal; and, as all have sinned, so all are proclaimed guilty before him. Then,

3. What a vast amount of guilt lies *at every man's door!*

It is not merely the sin committed, but the aggravations of that sin, that ought to fill the culprit soul with fear and dismay. It is not so much the consideration of our individual responsibility and guilt, as the extension of that thought to our relative, social, and national

* Isaiah, ii. 6—9, &c. &c.

capacities, that ought to enhance the conviction and increase the alarm. If a man's own personal transgressions are sufficient to blot him out of the land of the living,—nay, if any one iniquity, at any one time committed, might ruin the soul for ever and ever,—then how is that prospect increased when we consider all the relative and social violations of the great law of man's universal responsibility running in all its diversified channels, and drawing them all into one great flood as they unite upon every man's head, and rest upon every individual being? And as the streams of that great law widen and expand, in the extension of its claims, through the higher gradations of the realm, from the humble cottage up to the royal throne, the centre and union of the whole, who does not tremble, who is not confounded, at the vast amount of violated obligations, and incurred condemnation, to which all orders, more or less, stand exposed, and with which they are all chargeable in the sight of God? Considered in this light we might well stand amazed at the immensity of man's own personal guilt, the vast amount of a nation's crimes, and, above all, at the wonderful forbearance and long-suffering of God! The wonder is, that the Lord should

ever bear with the sins of men and nations as he does. The wonder is, that he does not at once rise up to judgment, and sweep away the inhabitants of this guilty earth, with one mighty stroke, into utter and everlasting destruction. Nor could it be easy to reconcile his long-suffering endurance with the general purity and justice of his character, did not the word of truth inform us, that amidst all this confusion and disorder, created by the sins of men, he has a vast plan of mercy in execution ; and that, from among these brands fitted for the burning, there are some, in every age, and out of every nation, whom he hath chosen to himself, on whom he will bestow his love, and whom he will crown with his tender mercies. With this object in view, he sits at the helm, overruling all. Were it not for the execution of this purpose, he would not bear with the sins of men for a single moment ; and when this gracious purpose shall be accomplished, he will bear no longer, but will cast " all the nations into hell that forget God," and overwhelm them in the bottomless pit with certain and everlasting perdition ! And then thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, as well as the poor and mean, will all receive the due wages of their various

crimes. And, oh ! who can tell the amount of those crimes, or conceive the just punishment of that award ! The mind sinks under the task when we attempt an application to this work. Talents neglected ; abilities abused ; influence and authority averted from the cause of God and his truth, and dedicated to the service of pleasure and sin ; souls more valuable than thousands of worlds, trained by some in an early career of impious neglect or wicked aversion to the author of our being and the God of our salvation ; and soothed and flattered by others with the delusive hopes of a baseless confidence and vain expectation ; privileges which, like Capernaum, have exalted us to heaven, abused and slighted, and, ultimately, like that devoted city, thrusting us down to hell ; and this to be seen among all orders and all degrees of men, from the highest to the lowest ; and most strikingly discovered among those who, by their station, office, influence, or authority, ought to stem the torrent, and set a safe example for the guidance of the rest ! The mind staggers in the contemplation of this scene ; the tongue falters in telling this sad tale ; the pen trembles in the hand that would record a nation's guilt and danger, and point out the just judgment of God

against our vast and untold impieties! Was Sodom's doom tremendous? There are *other* cities, *other* nations, and *other* people, who are exposed to a heavier condemnation. Were Tyre and Sidon swept off by the floods of divine vengeance? More tolerable will it be for them in the day of God's judgment than for *others*, whose privileges have been greater than theirs, but whose ingratitude and guilt have exceeded their enormities.* Hear this, O my country, nation, and people! Is not this thy character drawn by unerring truth?—"In *thee* have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of *thee* have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; in *thee* have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast *despised* mine holy things, and hast *profaned* my sabbaths. In *thee* are men that carry tales to shed blood; and in *thee* they eat upon the mountains; in the midst of *thee* they commit lewdness; in *thee* have they discovered their father's nakedness; in *thee* have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And *one* hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and *another* hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and

* Matt. xi. 21—24.

another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In *thee* have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken *usury* and *increase*, and thou hast *greedily* gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast *forgotten me*, saith the Lord.* Can we wonder, then, that such a solemn sentence as this should stand recorded against the guilty sinners of this wicked world? "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word."†

4. How *just* will be the righteous judgment of God upon all impenitent sinners at last!

If men will not hear, nor fear, nor turn from their evil ways, who shall dare impugn the just judgment of God executed upon the guilty and

* Ezek. xxii. 7—12.

† Isaiah, xxiv. 1—3.

unhumbled? If men will serve such masters as sin and Satan, is it not right that they should receive their wages? If nations will cast off the fear of God, and trample his laws and ordinances under foot, is it not meet that they should eat of the fruit of their own ways and be filled with their own devices? Where is the injustice of such a procedure? Shall not God vindicate his own authority, and uphold the integrity of his dominion, although all orders and degrees of men conspire together to uproot his government and erect the puny efforts of their own arm instead? Must not heaven and earth applaud such a step, and proclaim the equity and justice of the great Lord of all? But will not that vindication of the insulted Majesty of Heaven be most tremendous? Will it not fall with an awful weight upon the head of the impenitent and guilty? If just will be the sentence, will it not be as signal as inevitable and fearful? "Who can stand in thy sight when thou art angry!" What a word! What a timely concern should it spread throughout the guilty world! As nothing can equal, in conception, the arraignment of that judgment, so nothing can describe the realities of its execution. How

will the earth and the heavens be shaken when the throne shall be set and the books opened ! How will the sun become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon as blood ! How will the stars of heaven fall to the earth, as a figtree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken by a mighty wind ! How will the heavens depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island be moved out of their places !* What signs will there be in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon earth what distress of nations with perplexity ! How will the sea and the waves roar, and the hearts of men fail them for fear, when they shall be looking after those things which are coming on the earth ; when they shall find the powers of heaven shaken, and shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory !† How will the hands of the mighty hang down ! How will the eyes of the lofty be humbled ! How will the hearts of the hardened melt with fear ! How will the loins of the impious be loosened, and the knees of the scorner and mocker tremble and strike together ! How

* Rev. vi. 12—14.

† Luke, xxi. 25—27.

will all the guilty nations of the earth stand speechless and dumb before the awful tribunal ! How will every mouth be stopped ; every tongue be still ; and every one confounded before God ! And will not God judge the world *righteously* in that great day ? Yes ; “ *in righteousness* will he judge the world, and the people with equity.” Whether the sentence then finally proceeding from his lips be of mercy or wrath—acquittal or condemnation—it will be a *righteous* sentence—a *righteous* curse ; and all the hosts of heaven will applaud the verdict ! shouting over the multitudes of the wicked, as they “ go away into everlasting punishment,”—“ So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord !” Then,

5, and lastly, Let all who would escape that fearful doom *bethink* themselves in time, and *flee* to the appointed refuge, while mercy may be had.

We must not suppose that this fearful prospect can afford any satisfaction even to such as are delivered from the pit, except as the will of God is done, and sin receives its due reward. Nay, the great God himself cries out, “ Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die ? saith the Lord God ; and not that he should

return from his ways and live?" Judgment is, indeed, his "strange work," and the last thing which he carries into effect. But if his laws be thus disregarded, and his mercy set at nought, justice must of necessity take place. He can no more abstain from punishing the finally impenitent than he can cease to bless his people who are saved in his dear Son. To this refuge, then, let all flee who would escape the just judgment of God. Of that blessed hope which is set before us, let all lay hold who would be delivered from the wrath to come. Let all acknowledge their guilt, and all sue for mercy. Let none think to outbrave the laws of heaven, nor vainly attempt to hide their sins from God. Let each one confess his own sins before God, and cry for mercy through the blood of Jesus. Let the nation's guilt be bewailed in the same manner, and all supplicate for the nation's pardon and peace. As all have had a share in the accumulation of our national crimes, let all lift up their voice for national mercy. *Where* was Israel's safety when the Egyptian first-born were destroyed? In the *blood* sprinkled over their doors. *Why* were they not cut off when Pharaoh and his armies were overwhelmed in the waters?

Because the *Lord* was their protector and guide.
Oh ! then, let us seek the same mercy, and the
same security, and *we* shall be safe, like them.
He that blessed them can bless *us*; and if we
are interested in the Saviour's merits, who fulfilled all righteousness, we shall never come into condemnation, but pass from death unto life.

SERMON VII.

GOD'S REVEALED WILL THE ONLY SAFE
RULE FOR ALL INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE,
AND THE ONLY LEGITIMATE FOUNDA-
TION FOR ALL NATIONAL LAW.

JOSHUA, I. 8.

*“ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth :
but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou
mayest observe to do according to all that is written
therein : for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous,
and then thou shalt have good success.”*

ONE of the greatest fallacies existing at the present day is, the supposition that the things recorded of the ancient Jewish people chiefly regarded their temporal concerns, and were exclusively confined to themselves. It is evident that, if this were true, we are at once stripped of the largest portion of the inestimable treasure of the word of God ; or that we can derive profit from it only in an indirect manner, by inference or deduction ; and could not consider

the ancient records of Divine wisdom as intended for our own advantage; and therefore, as not binding upon ourselves. But if this were the case with *one* part of Scripture; why not with the *other*? And then, again, if so, how easy the process to lay aside the word of God *altogether*, and leave men to act according to their own will, without a sure guide, and without any effectual restraint! Considering the awful consequences of such a supposition, there can be no doubt from whence it proceeds, and to what it would ultimately lead; nor can anything more effectually further the devices of the enemy, or tend to bring down the anger of God upon guilty men, than the adoption of such a sentiment, and acting according to the spirit with which it is imbibed. A decided stand must therefore be made against the encroaching inroads of this maxim by every one who would maintain the cause of God, and urge the claims of truth and holiness.

The Author of His own Word tells us of its extent and application. We are assured that "*every* word of God is pure." We are admonished—"Add thou not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."* Nor

* Prov. xxx. 5, 6.

can anything be more alarming than the awful denunciation with which the sacred canon closes:—"And if any man shall *take away* from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."*

That this was the principle by which the inspired apostles were guided in their interpretation of the sacred writings is manifest: and especially in the use which they made of the various events recorded in Israel's history of old. Improving the manner in which God dealt with them in the wilderness for their various murmurings and rebellions, St. Paul says: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (τυποι): and they are written for *our* admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."† Nor is this confined to *events*;—in another place ‡ he states—"For whatsoever things were *written* aforetime were *written* for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." Can any one read the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and not see that a mere

* Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

† 1 Cor. x. 1—12.

‡ Rom. xv. 4.

earthly inheritance was the least thing the ancient believing fathers expected? Who must not perceive that they all “desired a better country, even an heavenly,” and “looked for that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!”*

It is of importance to notice this, because, otherwise, such a passage as that of my text might be thrown aside as some of the useless lumber with which, by such persons, the word of God is supposed to be encumbered; and because the affirmation of this broad truth will be of considerable use to aid us in the various discussions on which we are now about more particularly to enter.

The text is a part of the Lord's charge to Joshua, after the death of Moses, on entering upon the office, to which he had been previously appointed,† as the leader of Israel in bringing them into the promised land of rest. The Lord assured him that he would fulfil all his promises to his people. Every place of which he had spoken would he give them. Not an enemy should be able to stand before them. He would

* See also the decisive testimony of the seventh Article of the church of England.

† Numb. xxvii. 15—23.

be with Joshua as he had been with his servant Moses ; would never fail him, nor forsake him. But in the performance of his covenanted promises, and in the exercise of his mercy and faithfulness, the Lord particularly charged him, and all Israel with him—" Only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do *according to all the law* which Moses my servant commanded thee ; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."* And then, that Joshua might not be left in doubt or uncertainty respecting his future career, nor under any discouragement in the prospect of difficulties which might beset his path, nor without a sure direction for the guidance of his proceedings, the Lord further adds—" This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein ; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee ? Be strong and of good courage ; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed ; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."†

* Josh. i. 1—7.

† Ver. 8, 9.

Did this concern Joshua and Israel alone? Is not this written for *our* learning? Is not this one of those things which happened unto them for ensamples unto *us*? Did the Lord thus charge Joshua? Does he not also charge *us* in the same manner? Was it necessary for Joshua to have the book of the law continually before him, and to meditate therein day and night? Is it not equally necessary that *we* should do so too? Could not Joshua expect to succeed unless this were the case? And can *we* prosper in our souls, or in any of our ways, unless *we* take God's revealed law or word for *our* guide, and make that the standard of all our goings? Does not God, in speaking to one, speak to *all*? —Besides, what does this charge given to Joshua *imply*? Does it not imply that he *stood in need* of such gracious counsel and heavenly advice? Does it not imply that *without it* he had no wisdom of *his own* to guide his steps, nor strength of *his own arm* to overcome his enemies? Does it not imply that, destitute of "this book of the law," or swerving from its testimony, his way could *not* be prosperous, neither could he have good success? Because, acting contrary to the voice of "this book of the law," he would be acting in opposition to the

revealed will of God; and therefore, instead of being pleasing in his sight, he would provoke his anger, and bring down his heavy displeasure upon himself and his people?

And, we would ask, does not all this speak to *ourselves*? Does not the Lord, with the same voice, address *us*? Do *we* not stand in need of a sure guide for our steps, and a safe rule for us to walk by? Have *we* any wisdom of our own to mark out the course we ought to pursue; or strength of our own arm to overcome the difficulties or dangers which beset our path? Surely, if we know ourselves, we must see that we have not; and if we have not made this discovery, we have yet to learn, that as "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool," so "the way of man is not in *himself*; it is not in *man* that walketh to direct his steps."* Then, if this be the case, let us come to a more distinct consideration of this matter; and shew—

I. That it is of the utmost importance that every man should have a sure guide for the direction of his steps.

II. Where is this sure guide to be met with?

III. The benefit and advantages of abiding

* Jer. x. 23.

by its provisions and directions. May the good Lord guide and bless us, lead us in the right way, and fix our hopes upon that Rock which alone can avail for our present peace and eternal welfare !

The solemn manner in which this address is given to Joshua, as well as the weighty matter which it contains, leads us to the introduction of the first doctrine laid down for consideration,—viz.,

I. That it is of the utmost importance that every man should have a sure guide for the direction of his steps.

Surely this truth must commend itself at once to every one's notice and approbation. Joshua's course was not more difficult than our own ; nor do we less stand in need of that counsel, caution, direction, and guidance, which the Lord was pleased to vouchsafe to him. But this will more distinctly appear by considering a few particulars, in which all, more or less, are concerned.

1. If you consider the *character and condition of man*, the truth before us must claim universal acknowledgment.

Now the character and condition of man are to be considered in reference to his prime origin

and dependent circumstances. Man is the creature of God, the workmanship of his hands. His being, powers, and blessings, are all derived from his Maker. He is therefore bound to *please* him in all his ways and works. He must love, honour, and obey him. Nothing can release him from this duty, nothing can dispense with this law. It is as necessary an appendage to his creature-condition, as breathing and food are requisite for the support of his life and continued existence. Besides which, in the same God from whom he received his original creation, he lives, and moves, and holds his being; and thereby the obligation increases in proportion to the blessings he receives, and the munificence and dignity of the source from whence they are derived. But *how* is this to be done? By what *measure*, so to speak, or after what *manner*, is this love to be expressed, and this obedience to be rendered? That there ought to be *some* standard for his guidance, and that that standard should be such as may be answerable to his condition, and agreeable to the mind of him from whom all his blessings flow, and with whom he has to do, must be, we should think, apparent to all. Every one must see, from the character and condition of man, as the creature of God, the workman-

ship of his power, and supported by his bounty, that it is of the utmost importance that every being, thus circumstanced, should be possessed of a sure guide for the direction of his steps, in rendering that measure of duty and obedience which is required at his hands. Again,—

2. If you consider man not only as the mere creature of God, but as *endued with an immortal soul*, the truth before us will be still more apparent.

When God created man out of the dust of the earth, we read* that he “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” That principle, derived immediately from God, like its great and glorious Author, must be of an immortal capacity; and in some condition or other it never can cease to exist. This being the case, it is plain that the immortal soul is the chief part of man—nay, the very man; the body being only a sort of case, or tabernacle, like a jewel in a casket, in which the more valuable treasure has taken its abode. Is it not requisite, then, that the *soul*, above all, should be most diligently attended to? Is it not necessary, cost whatever it might, that the

* Gen. ii. 7.

soul's welfare should be secured; and that, whatever might become of other things, *that* should be placed in a condition congenial to its nature, and agreeable to the source from whence it came? He must be blind, indeed, who would question or deny the validity of such a suggestion as this. But *how*, again, is this to be done? By what means is this to be attained? Who can mark out the course necessary to be pursued for the acquisition of that happiness of which the soul is capable, and which alone can be answerable to its nature in the source from whence it originated, and the end to which it is, therefore, possible that it may be exalted? That whatever professes to yield this direction should be a *sure* guide, without the least possibility of error or failure, all must confess. But from whence is it to be derived? Where is it to be met with? Taking all things into the account, it seems as impossible for any created being, however excellent, to mark out this course, or provide this rule, much as it is needed, as it is that such a creature can give himself existence, or continue his being, even after he has received it, independently of Him from whom it is derived. Considering man, therefore, as the workmanship of God, endued with an immortal soul, capable

of everlasting felicity or eternal misery, it is evident that he stands in need of a sure guide for the direction of his steps, in order that he might avoid the one, and attain the other. Further,—

3. If you consider man *as a sinner before God*, exposed to all the dreadful consequences of his rebellion, and utterly without ability to help himself, the truth of this position must still more strikingly appear.

Now this is no mere supposition. Such is his awful case. Man continued not in his first estate. The sad history of the fall is written as with a sunbeam, and its effects are everywhere to be met with. The beautiful specimen of Divine workmanship and skill, like a broken vessel, is marred in the hands of the potter, and lies shivered in pieces and involved in ruin. Every thing every where proclaims the sad disaster, coupled with all its mournful effects. Man is degraded, guilty, undone ; and that by his own sin. When Adam fell, all fell ; when Adam sinned, all died. “When sin entered into the world, death entered by sin, and so death passed upon all men ; for that all have sinned.” What is the consequence ? Fallen by nature, all are corrupt by practice ; and in either, or both respects, “the soul that sinneth it shall die.” And,

oh ! who can tell what a fearful thing it must be to fall into the hands of the living God ! The wrath of that being must be, like himself, infinite and everlasting ; and on whomsoever it may come it will be “ a consuming fire.” Is it not, then, needful, that, in order to be delivered from this wrath and rescued from this ruin, we should have a sure guide for the direction of our hopes ? What if man should mistake here ? What if he should err, and, instead of taking the right path, swerve still further from the way of life and peace ? What if, in the pursuit of such a course, instead of finding deliverance from his sins, and all the consequences due to them, he should sink still lower in the mire, incur a heavier penalty, and involve himself in a deeper condemnation ? Is not the bare thought dreadful ? Is not the mere possibility of such an issue enough to fill the soul with dismay ? Then who must not perceive the truth of the position now before us,—that, considering what we all are as sinners against God, it is of the utmost importance that every person should have a *sure guide* for the direction of his steps and the measure of his hopes, in seeking deliverance from that sin whose wages is death and everlasting perdition ? Again,—

4. If you consider man *as exposed to all the vicissitudes of this life*,—as subject to sorrow, suffering, and pain,—as liable to sickness, affliction, and all the other evils incident to our present existence,—the truth of this position must claim universal approbation.

What a chequered scene is that through which we are called to pass! Everywhere it is visible, to all beholders, that “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.” What floods of tears are not some constrained to shed!—what nights of sorrow, and days, and months, and even years, of affliction do not some pass through!—what sighs and groans do not some pour forth to lessen the burdens under which they sink, and which are ready to overwhelm them on every side!—what losses and bereavements are we not called to endure! and often, as soon as we find relief from one trouble or sorrow, another, like the returning waves of the sea, succeeds in its place, and threatens to bear down all before it! Where, among all the race of man, is the eye that never dropped a tear, the heart that never felt a pang, the bosom that never heaved a sigh? And is it not needful, then, that, amidst all these sorrows and afflictions, we should be in possession of a *safe rule*

for the direction of our steps in the day of distress? Where am I to look for comfort, support, or relief? How am I to demean myself under my troubles? In what light am I to regard them? Who sent them?—for what purpose, or for what end? What is the chief thing I should seek after under them? These, and a thousand other inquiries, which spring up in rapid succession in the mind, all clearly shew the vast importance of the truth now before us. They clearly shew that, in reference to my troubles, as well as to my sins and my soul, it is absolutely necessary for my comfort and peace that I should have a sure guide to direct my course,—that I may know where to look, and what to seek after, as the only effectual remedy to lessen my sorrows, or to sanctify my trials. But yet again—

5. If you consider man in reference *to death, judgment, and eternity*, no voice, we feel persuaded, can ever be lifted up in opposition to this truth.

Now, it is a certain fact that we must all die. Death reigns over the whole race of man, because all have sinned. There is no discharge in that war. All must hear the voice, feel the force, and fall under the power, of that enemy.

The mighty and mean,—the poor, the rich,—the wise, the ignorant,—crowns and sceptres, as well as rags and tatters,—must all, sooner or later, mingle in one common dust! Yea, the man who has grasped kingdoms in his possession, or even bestrode the whole world in his rapid career, shall come at last to claim no other territorial extent than the mere length and breadth of a few rude planks, enclosing his mortal remains when committed to the silent tomb! But this is not all. After death is the *judgment*. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. “All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth: they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.” These things all must witness, all must behold, all must participate. Every one must die; and every one, after death, will either be cast into hell or received up into glory. With such events, then, before us—events so deeply interesting, so infinitely momentous—is it not of the first concern that we should all possess a *safe rule* for the guidance of our steps, in order that we might die in peace, and rise hereafter to glory? And how is this consider-

ation heightened when we reflect that, as sinners, we are all exposed to a miserable death and dreadful eternity, and that the only means by which we may be delivered from the one, or escape the other, is by being saved from our sins, which are the cause and the desert of both ! Is it not requisite that all should be right here ? Is it not necessary that there should be no error, no mistake, no wrong faith, or false hope, where our everlasting destiny depends upon the state in which death may call us away, and the last trump arraign us before the bar of God ? And how does all this rise in our esteem when we call to mind, that it will be *too late* hereafter to set that right which was left at random uncertainty here ; that there is no repentance in the grave ; that no one is ever permitted to come back from the eternal world to rectify his mistaken course followed while he was in this life ; that as the tree falleth, so it lieth ; that he that is unjust, will be unjust still ; that he that is filthy, will be filthy still ; and that he that is holy, will be holy still !* Surely it must be seen and confessed, that, with all these things before us, one way or the other, and that for ever and ever, it

* Rev. xxii. 11.

is of the utmost importance that every man should have a *safe guide* for the direction of his steps, in order that he might die a happy death, and inherit a glorious immortality.

But these are merely some preliminary observations. We are not only to consider the application of this truth in reference to man universally, in his individual capacity; we must extend the remark to all his relative and social obligations. Suppose, then, we consider man in his diffusive existence—

1. As a *husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, neighbour or friend*. It is evident that the duties incumbent on him in these relations are of too various and important a character to be left to a casual guidance, or a mere *ad libitum* attention. The peace, harmony, comfort, and welfare, not simply of single families, but of whole communities, and that not only with respect to the present time, but their future and eternal destiny, must depend, in a very great measure, upon the manner in which these relative and social obligations are either attended to or disregarded. And is it not requisite that every person so circumstanced should be in possession of a *sure guide*, to which he may always refer for information and direction,

concerning the many interesting, affecting, and momentous duties he is bound to discharge? We should think that no person can be so wild or rash as to assert that no such rule is necessary, or that all such obligations are to be left to mere caprice, or utterly set at nought. Low as we are already sunk in the scale of morals, and lower yet as we are rapidly sinking, still we would hope we are not so far gone as to affirm that these claims are of no force, or that it does not much concern us in what way they are to be attended to, or whether they are at all to be committed to our charge. Considered, therefore, in this respect, the necessity and propriety of such a rule, and such a guide, must be apparent. Again, suppose we take a more extended view of the subject, and consider man—

2. *In his intercourse with his fellow-beings,* and the truth now before us will present itself to our notice in still more striking colours. How much depends on the laws and maxims by which such intercourse is founded, and the manner in which it is upheld and maintained! A vast proportion of confidence will be mutually called forth into constant operation. No small degree of reliance must, in the very nature of things, be placed on the integrity and principles of each

other ; and this, in very many cases, will necessarily be of no ordinary dimensions, and carried to no common extent. On the one hand, it must be evident, that frequent opportunities of acting with injustice will unavoidably occur, which, without proper restraint, may lead to the most lamentable results ; and, on the other, it will as often happen, that the means of support, the comfort and welfare, of numbers, may mainly depend on the existence or absence of that principle or guide which will always be found the grand bulwark of integrity, truth, and justice. And this applies to all the ordinary intercourse of men with each other, whether in the common transactions of life, or in the whole process of commerce, business, or trade. What openings for fraud are continually presented ! How often may trust be abused, and confidence broken ! How frequently may not one take advantage of a neighbour's necessities, and, for the sake of a sordid passion, inflict an injury upon another, either in his character, person, or property, which nothing can retrieve, and which he may never be able to recover throughout all his days ! It is evident, therefore, that where so much depends upon the intercourse of man with his fellow-beings, he ought not to be left to the

mere guidance of human estimate, or his own feelings ; which, of course, will always vary, because always uncertain ; but should conform to a standard which can never err, the application of which would be as effective in the case of a thousand beings, or a nation at large, as in that of a single individual, however great or humble. But is it not equally clear, that before such conformity can be practised, we must be in *possession* of the rule by which we are to walk ? Yet, again, suppose you consider man as—

3. *Invested with authority, influence, and power.* It is impossible that an organized state of society can exist without these necessary appendages to its being and welfare. A positive equality of wealth, rank, or power, is a mere chimera, the offspring of a restless or vicious imagination. It involves an evident contradiction in terms, where a variety of grade and condition cannot be dispensed with ; and where such a diversity, from the very nature of things, will arise, which no levelling principles can extinguish, and which God never intended should be swept off from the earth. “Adam was *first* formed, then Eve ;” and so in every other respect we evidently perceive, as in the birth of children, primogeniture and precedence ; and in

the exercise of talent or ability, influence and power. This, of course, will necessarily assume a higher character, and spread a more extensive sway, in proportion as we ascend the scale of social existence ; till, passing through the several links of which it consists, we come to the utmost point which binds and keeps the whole in one orderly compact. Divested of this systematic regularity, and the authority and power necessarily connected with all its branching details, what a monstrous spectacle would human society, especially in respect of its more enlarged dimensions, present to the eye ? As the apostle argues on another subject, so we might truly inquire, " If the whole body were an *eye*, where were the *hearing* ? If the whole were *hearing*, where were the *smelling* ?" * " For the body (social and politic, as well as spiritual and ecclesiastic,) is not *one* member, but many." Now it must be evident that the opportunities, as well as the ability, for doing good or evil, will be in proportion to the station which a man fills, and the ascendancy he possesses. Take the case of a *pastor* in the church of God. What numbers of souls might he not mislead to their ruin by

* 1 Cor. xii. 14, 17.

his wicked example, or unscriptural instructions! On the contrary, how many, by the blessing of God, might he not be the means of leading in the paths of truth and righteousness, by a life spent in conformity to his sacred calling! In either respect, the good or evil which he is the means of diffusing will be in proportion to the office he fills and the influence he exerts, both of which far exceed the mere private capacity. Or, take the case of the *magistrate* invested with the power of administering the laws and regulations of the social or national compact. We use the word in its broad application to the whole process of legal dispensation. A wise, temperate, upright, impartial enforcement of the laws of the realm, in whatever hands it may rest, must be considered as a national blessing, the consequences of which will be as extensive as they are beneficial. But, on the contrary, a lax, capricious, unjust, partial, or unfaithful execution (or contempt) of the law, can be regarded in no other light than as a national calamity,—a curse to any people, and not a blessing. Or, take again the case of the *framers*, as well as the executors, of the laws of the realm. An abandoned, vicious, or infidel assembly, legislating for the order and government of the

empire, can never be expected to provide enactments of a different description from the principles by which they are actuated. In other words, if let alone to work out the evil propensities which lodge within, they would, in the course of time, deluge the land with atheistical impiety under the fallacious plea of providing for its welfare and happiness. And what a curse this must be to any community no one can adequately tell! On the contrary, if you substitute in their room an assembly of men loving truth and working righteousness, what a blessing might they not prove to any country, or to any people! Swayed by such motives, they would of course evince their power and utility in all their deliberations for the public weal, and carry them out in beneficial application for the general prosperity. Or yet again, to advance a step further,—take the case of the *highest power* in the realm, or the royal personage in whose hands it is vested; and is it not easy to perceive the unavoidable consequences resulting from the character of the individual, both privately and in his regal capacity, who is raised to that dignity, and the sure effects of the lawless impunity, or conscientious regard, with which the kingly office is executed? In the one case, thousands would

have cause to bless the hand that made such a happy provision for a nation's welfare : in the other, all wise and upright subjects must mourn and grieve over the calamity which they cannot avert : and none could feel pleasure or delight but those who were patronized in their wickedness by such an influential authority, and who had the plea of such an example to urge in favour of their crimes and abandoned courses. Is it not, then, of the utmost importance that, amidst all this variety of condition, connected with such influence, power, and authority, from the pastoral staff up to the royal throne, men should be in possession of an *unerring rule* for the guidance of their steps, in all their ways and works, in order that the evil may be avoided, and the good produced ? Ought not the *minister* to be in possession of such a rule in the arduous duties he is called to perform ? Ought not the *magistrate* to be endued with a similar direction, in the exercise of the functions with which he is invested ? Ought not the *legislator* to be guided by an unerring standard in devising means, and laying down enactments, for the government of others ? And, above all, ought not *he*, who is generally supposed to be above all law in his supreme capacity of presiding over the whole

jurisdiction of the realm, to be influenced by some sure guide which would lead him to a faithful execution of that responsible trust which puts him beyond the reach of those obligations which it is his duty to enforce on others? It matters not whether he discharge his functions by his *own* hand, or by proxy in the person of his *advisers*. The necessity of such a rule is apparent; and, taking the latter case also into the account, not merely for himself, but for those likewise to whom he deposes his power and authority. Nor may we conceive that, in either of these cases, any one individual thus circumstanced can really or truly perform the duties of his office from the best principles, or with any prospect of success, under the blessing of Heaven, unless, as before observed, such a guide be in his possession, be made his constant study, and followed as the grand directory of all his ways and works.

SERMON VIII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CARRIED ON IN FURTHER INQUIRY.

JOSHUA, 1. 8.

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

THE fact then is plain. Whatever view you take of the character and condition of man, as a member of the great human family constituted in this world, and hastening on to another, the blessing of which we speak is absolutely essential for his welfare and happiness. But the question is—

II. *Where* is this sure guide to be met with?

Everything bespeaks its necessity and importance. Whether you consider man as the creature of God; as endued with an immortal soul; as a sinner against the Almighty, and exposed

to his anger and displeasure ; as exposed to all the vicissitudes of this life,—pain, suffering, affliction, want ; as a dying creature, and having to meet God in judgment, and be for ever doomed to hell, or received up into glory ; or whether you consider him in his relative and social, as well as in his individual capacity, as a husband, wife, parent, child, master, or mistress ; or in his intercourse with his fellow-beings in the various conditions of trust and confidence which are necessarily connected, more or less, with all the commercial and other transactions of life ; or as invested with power, influence, and authority in the diversified grades of the community, which are necessary for its being and welfare, according to the divine appointment, whether those conditions embrace the office of pastor, magistrate, legislator, or prince—we say, in all these respects, which include everything that is interesting and important to men, both with regard to this life and that which is to come, the necessity of such a rule as that for which we plead is obvious ; and to deny the assertion would be to make the declaration of such a degree of vicious impiety as few persons, it is hoped, would have the hardihood to patronize or avow. But still the question is, *Where*

is this sure guide to be met with? *Where* is it to be found? That it must exist *somewhere*, no one can doubt. To assert that no rule of the description we enforce actually exists, or that man is left destitute of the guidance for which we speak, would be such a reproach cast upon our Maker, and such a stigma impressed on the accountable creature, that the mind shudders at the bare idea, and trembles to hear the rash avowal. But *where* is it to be met with? That is the question. And until this inquiry be satisfactorily answered, it is plain that, with all his boasted powers, in the scale of intelligent and accountable beings, man is like a vessel at sea, without a helm for its steerage, or an anchor for its safety. In such a condition, the utmost he can attain is mere *conjecture*, whose continual fluctuations and varying uncertainties must always leave him at the mercy of every contingency or caprice which will unavoidably occur. *Where*, then, we again ask, is this sure guide to be found?

1. Is man capable of *furnishing himself with such a rule*?

Can he, of himself, provide such a blessing? Evidently not; and that not merely as the negative applies to him as he *now* is, but even sup-

posing him to be what he *once* was. Even in paradise, in a state of holy rectitude, without the least tendency to evil, when the natural bias inclined to nothing but what was congenial to itself—purity and holiness,—even *then* we find that a guide was necessary for his steps, and vouchsafed for his good. And can we suppose, for a single moment, that he stands in less need of such a provision *now* that he has lost that rectitude, is despoiled of that holiness, and inclined by nature to nothing but what is evil? It would be the wildest extravagance, and the greatest folly, to admit the assumption, even by a distant imagination; but to maintain such an hypothesis, might any one be found rash enough to do so, would betray, in the strongest colours, the deep infatuation with which the fallen creature is imbued in everything which concerns his well-being here, or his happiness hereafter. Let any person of calm reflection accurately survey the spirit and actions of men, as guided by their own wisdom or discernment; or dissect the feelings and tendencies of his own bosom; and at what other conclusion can he arrive than this—that the greatest calamity which could ever befall human nature, would be for men to be left to their own guidance, without any other security

for their welfare or peace than what they themselves may afford ?

We do not deny, indeed, but that there are many things which, *so far as they go*, men may discover and practise to their advantage. My own feelings, for instance, will tell me, that fire, too incautiously approached, will burn ; and this discovery will teach me to keep at a proper distance. Common sense, likewise, will furnish me with the conclusion, that a life of extravagance and folly will terminate sooner or later in penury and distress ; and this, again, should teach me prudence and discretion. So, again, if I see two persons moving from different directions towards the same object, I draw the obvious inference that, continuing their course, there must be a certain point at which they will meet. And this shews the *utmost extent* to which the powers of man can be carried, whether exercised for his own, or the welfare of others. He must have some distinct *data* to go upon—some clear proposition laid down, before he may exercise his ingenuity or ability in deducing the practical inference ; and that inference can, of course, extend no further than the ground which supplies it. But suppose his propositions were fallacious ; or, although the data were clear, per-

verse deductions were forced from their bearings; what confusion and disorder would be created! And suppose that this awful perversion, and these sad mistakes, were not confined to a single individual, but spread abroad as the darling pet of multitudes; how would the consequent evils multiply and increase, in proportion as the cause which produced them diffused its influence! Now, as man is prone to err, and, in the majority of cases, apt to take the wrong, instead of the right path, even in the commonest actions of life, what a dangerous thing would it be for this deceptive, erring creature to be left to his *own resources* for the guidance of his steps, when, although he perceive that certain things, and certain courses, must lead to certain results, as clearly as that two and two make four, he generally acts as if the contrary were the case, or the total calculation would reach a greater or a less amount! And if he be found so miserably defective in these comparatively *little* things, what dependence can be placed on him in more *important* concerns, where *higher* obligations and issues are at stake? Man, therefore, is utterly incapable himself of furnishing such a guide for the direction of his steps, and we must look elsewhere for the blessing.

2. Consider the *greatness and importance of the matters at stake*, and we think it must be confessed that it would not be safe to trust in any provision, coming from such a human source, even supposing it possible to be provided.

Now, what are the matters at issue? They relate to the conduct and demeanour of immortal and accountable creatures, in respect of their well-being both here and hereafter. The creature is to glorify his Maker; the soul is to be attended to, and its happiness sought after as the great end of man; the sinner, in the day of grace, is to seek pardon and peace. Now is the accepted time, and he must embrace it; now is the day of salvation, and he must seek to obtain it. Moreover, there are his trials and troubles to be improved, grace to be sought after under them, and prayer made for a sanctifying influence, that the whole may work together for good. Then, again, there is an hour of death drawing near; there is the day of judgment fast approaching; and preparation to be made for both, of such a kind as that, when they arrive, peace may be found on the one, and deliverance and victory in the other. These are no trivial matters; no small concerns. They

ought not to be left to mere hazardous experiments, or fallacious surmises. If you extend the inquiry, you find more matters crowding upon your notice from every side. There is the Lord to be honoured in our daily walk and conversation. There are all our social and relative obligations to be discharged for the good of men, and for the glory of God. In every section of the community, from the highest to the lowest; in the cultivation of the tenderest ties and most useful reciprocities; in the various intercourse of men with their fellow beings; in all the transactions of life; in the discharge of the most sacred and responsible duties; in the administration of justice, punishing the evil, and protecting the good; in devising laws, and framing enactments for the public welfare; in the exercise of power issuing from the royal throne and flowing in all its various streams;—there are too many interests at stake; there is too much need of wisdom, and firmness, and discretion, and faithfulness, to be exercised; there are too many evils to be avoided, and too much good to be achieved, for any of these things to be committed to a guidance or direction which cannot ensure the end proposed, which all must see is so desirable to be attained! But *where*

is this blessing to be found? From *whence* is it to be derived? From what *source* must it proceed? Can *man* provide it? Can *man* furnish it? Who will dare to announce himself so arrogant, rash, or presumptuous, as to assert this ability? Oh! no; it cannot be. The matters here discussed are too important in themselves, the present and eternal welfare of man is too intimately connected with their issue, and the consequences of failing in their beneficial advancement are too serious and lasting, to be entrusted to a mere *human* guidance for their direction and pursuit. We must have a higher authority and safer way-mark than any arm of flesh can provide for the government of our steps and the measure of our hopes. The blessing we are seeking, therefore, is not yet found; and we still inquire for its desirable acquisition.

3. A provision of this kind, coming from any human source, would *fall below the circumstances and condition* in which we are placed; and therefore could never *meet the exigencies of our case*, nor, consequently, *answer the end proposed*.

If we come to a calm consideration of this subject, it must be conceded as a most evident and rational conclusion, that no provision, aris-

ing merely from the *creature*, can ever afford a safe rule for the direction of our steps ; especially in those things in which our most interesting concerns are involved. It must be something more than a mere human effort which may inform me of what is due from the creature to the Creator. It must be something beyond a mere human provision which can tell me in what way I am to act for the welfare of my immortal soul. I may think *this*, or suppose *that* ; but it is quite out of my power to lay down a sure path either for myself or others. I must look to a higher source for such a blessing as this. Just so, in the same manner, no man can tell how his sins may be pardoned ; nor how his soul may be saved. No man can tell how all the ills of this life may be found to work together for my good ; nor how the fear and sting of death may be overcome ; nor how I may die in safety, and rest in the hope of a joyful resurrection ; nor how, in the great day of the Lord, I may meet God in peace, and enter into his kingdom and glory. In all these respects, as I have received all my blessings from *another*, against whom I have sinned, and to whom I am accountable, it is evident that that which ought to be my guide under such circumstances, must

be answerable to the condition in which I am placed. For after all, however wise, or suitable, or excellent, such a provision may appear, the question must necessarily arise, will the rule thus formed be *agreeable to Him* to whom I am responsible, and with whom I have to do? If not, it is clear that it cannot yield a safe conduct. And if the very constitution of my state and circumstances, as a dependent creature, or a guilty sinner, be such as to incapacitate me for the production of such a work, then it must be plain that such a rule, in order to be possessed, must emanate from *another* source, and can never spring from myself. The same equally holds good with respect to every other particular of the human responsible constitution. *Who* is adequate to the task of laying down an infallible law for the guidance and performance of all the social obligations of life? *Who* can mark out with unerring certainty the way in which all the commercial intercourse of men with each other is to be carried on, and all the other particulars before enumerated? Say, if you please, that a man *ought* to love his wife, a parent his child, brethren each other, and a servant obey his master. Granted. But what is the *rule* of this love, and the *measure* of this obedience? How

far is it to be carried? Where is it to stop? Or is it without bounds? Say, again, if you please, that men *ought* to be true and just in all their dealings. No one doubts the proposition. But what is the *rule* of that integrity, and the measure of that justice? On whose legislation does it rest? By whose command is it to be practised? Is this a mere human enactment, or does it claim a higher power? and if so, then what does *that* authority say on the subject? Till you can ascertain this, you are evidently in the dark. Or if you say that ministers should attend to the welfare of their flocks, that magistrates should justly administer the laws, that senators and legislators should deliberate and act for the people's good, and that kings and princes, above all, should order the realm in truth and righteousness—no one doubts for a moment the truth of these assertions. But the question is, *by what are they to be governed* in so doing? By what *rule* is the pastor to walk in giving counsel and admonition to his flock? What *guidance* is the magistrate to follow in the administration of the laws, or the legislator in framing them, or the prince in dispensing them? Can it be supposed that all these vast and responsible duties may be faithfully discharged

without such a provision ; or that the bare consideration of what *ought* to be done ; or mere conformity to the exigencies of the occasion, or the rules prescribed by human authority, may constitute that direction ? Were this the case, the whole must be miserably defective, and would leave both the governing and the governed bereft of the chief ornament of accountable beings—namely, the influence of a principle superior to every earthly consideration—the power of a law above, and beyond, all law, without which all human legislation is but a sounding name ; but which, wherever it exists, will necessarily produce the most salutary consequences, in carrying every measure, which acknowledges its dominion, into happy execution for the general welfare.

The question, then, still recurs, *Where* is this rule to be met with ? *Where* is this guide to be found ? If man cannot furnish it of himself,—if the utmost that man can attain is conjecture, error, or uncertainty,—if the matters at issue are of too important a nature, involving interests of too complicated and too interesting a character to be entrusted to so hazardous an experiment as the guidance of man's wisdom or ability,—and if a provision of this kind, emanating from

such a source, would be utterly inadequate for the end in view, considering the whole circumstances of our state and condition,—then *where* are we to look for so desirable an attainment? *Who* must provide it? From what *source* must it proceed? From what *hand* must it come? There is but one answer to be given to these questions. *It must come from GOD. He* must afford this rule, and point out this direction. It must be the expression of *his* mind, and the revelation of *his* will. Nothing less than *this* will suffice; nothing less than *this* will answer the end proposed. And where such a revelation is wanting, or is not attended to, there must of necessity be nothing but uncertainty or error, together with confusion, impiety, and every evil word and work!

How, in the very *nature of things*, can the case be otherwise? Consider the subject in the very order of its existence; and to what other conclusion can you come than this,—namely, that *God's revealed will* is the only sure guide for the direction of the accountable creature's steps,—and that, as his responsible character follows him wherever he may be placed, so must that revealed will form the guidance of all his ways and works, however he may be situated?

Who, but the great Creator, can tell what the creature is bound to do, or how he is to honour and serve the Author of his existence? Who, but he who gave the soul, can tell what is necessary for the welfare of the soul? Who, but he against whom we have sinned, can tell how or in what manner that sin may be forgiven, and what is necessary to be done for the acquisition of that great blessing? Who, but he who hath appointed and sends the various afflictions and trials of life, can tell for what purpose they are sent, and how they may be found to work for our good? Who, but he who hath ordained death as a part of the just wages of sin, can tell how its cause may be removed, its evil remedied, its sting extracted, and itself converted into a blessing? Who, but he who hath appointed the day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, can tell how the guilty and undone, either now or then, may be delivered from condemnation, and passed from death unto life,—may escape the damnation of hell, and be exalted to the glory of God? It is manifest that none but God can tell; and, therefore, that it is nothing but the revelation of *his will* that can afford a sure direction both for the guidance of our steps and the measure of our hopes.

And does this apply merely to the *eternal* destiny of man? Does it not equally embrace his *present* being and *temporal* welfare? How can you separate these from each other? Are not both so intimately blended together, that they must of necessity exert a most powerful influence, as well upon the life that now is as that which is to come? When we take up that revelation for which we plead, one word coming from the mouth of God will for ever silence every cavilling objection which may be raised by ignorance, unbelief, or pride, against this most reasonable and equitable appointment. There we find that when we shall "all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, every one shall receive the things done *in the body*"—that is, while he was here, "whether it be good or whether it be bad."* The whole course, therefore, of man's continuance in this world, must of necessity be included within the compass of that rule coming from the blessed God, which is the only safe guide and sure direction of all our steps.

But shall we stop here? Can this be confined to man in his mere *individual* capacity?

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

Must it not follow, and rest upon him, however he may be placed, or wherever he is to be found? Can the necessity of such a rule abate, or be cast aside, when the individual enters upon any of the social or orderly relations of life? Does it not as certainly rest upon the whole community at large, as composed of the bulk of individuals, as it does upon individuals apart from the community? Nay, does not the necessity increase by that very circumstance, in proportion as duties and responsibilities are thereby multiplied? Does not the parent or child, the husband or wife, the master or servant, the neighbour or friend,—does not the man of confidence, commerce, business, or trade,—does not the pastor or flock, the magistrate or judge, the legislator or prince, *as such*, as much stand in need of this rule (nay, more) for the guidance of their goings in all the complicated machinery of their progressively increasing obligations, as they do require such a direction in their merely individual capacity? Woe worth the day when the negative shall be given to these inquiries! Woe worth the day when, amidst any of the relations of life, men shall stand up and say, However needful such a provision may be for

my own personal direction, yet I may utterly cast it off in my relative or official capacity, and walk in the way of my own heart, and in the sight of my own eyes ! And woe worth the day when such an impious sentiment as this shall spread from an individual to a whole community !—when a nation shall thus cast the fear of God behind the back, and in its legislative enactments, and the administration of its laws, shall abjure all regard for his authority !—when men shall deem themselves at liberty to insult the blessed God, in this manner, to his face, and boast of their release from the obligation of conforming to his will even in the most important concerns of life ; although they may profess to believe that by that will they must all stand or fall in the great day of account ! The inference to which such an avowal as this would lead is plain and inevitable. Either such a community or nation must soon degenerate into the awful depths of atheistical impiety, casting off all regard for the ever-blessed God, or the respect which they profess to pay to his revealed will, and the honour of his name, must be most shamefully hypocritical, and most abominably insincere and profane. This is the frightful dilemma

into which people and nations of this description are unavoidably led ; and we leave them to view their unenviable position at their leisure, to take a timely warning of their danger, and extricate themselves in the best manner they can.

We have now arrived at the point to which we have been aiming hitherto in this discourse, which is this—namely, *that the law, or revealed will of God, is the only safe rule for all individual guidance, as well as the only legitimate foundation for all national law.* And in reaching this mark, we are furnished with the true answer to the important inquiry, *Where* is this sure guide to be met with ? *Where* is this safe rule to be found ? To which we reply, it is to be found only in GOD'S REVEALED WORD AND WILL. That will, revealed in that word, is the only sure guide and the only safe direction for man in all his ways and works. No man can be right who is ignorant of, disbelieves, or disregards, that word. No man's ways or works can be acceptable in the sight of God, who throws aside that rule, and walks by the light of his own fire. Whether the observation be applied to a mere individual, or to the whole bulk of the nation,—whatever hope is cherished, or practice pursued, or law esta-

blished, which is not *based* upon that foundation, which *springs* not from that source, or is not *conformable* to that rule, is deceptive, ruinous, impious, unholy, profane; and is more calculated in the end to bring down the wrath of God than promote the welfare of such an empire or people.

Hence, the general direction of that revealed will of God is,—“To the *law* and to the *testimony*; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* Hence, David, both as a prince and a saint, says,† “Thy *word* is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.” Hence, St. Paul says,‡ “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works.” Hence, Moses thus addressed the children of Israel,§ “*All these words* which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk

* Isa. viii. 20.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.

† Ps. cxix. 105.

§ Deut. vi. 6, 7.

of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," &c. Hence, also, the Lord himself thus charged Joshua, when he invested him with the authority and command over his people,—“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest *observe to do according to all that is written therein*; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” And of the misery and wretchedness to which, sooner or later, they shall be reduced who disregard that “law” and that “testimony” to which we should always have recourse, both for individual and national guidance, it is said, “And *they* shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.”* Awful denunciation! Awful con-

* Isa. viii. 21, 22.

dition ! Awful curse ! How often has it been realized ! How signally has it been carried into effect ! Such a nation or people as this, persisting in the course thus censured and exposed, will be abhorred of God in this world, and doomed to everlasting perdition in the next !*

* See Zech. xi. 8 ; Ps. ix. 17.

SERMON IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED.

JOSHUA, I. 8.

“ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth : but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein : for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

INFINITELY momentous and instructive is the conclusion to which we have been brought in the preceding arguments ; and we might well cry out with the earnest Psalmist—“ Hear this, all ye people ; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world ; both high and low, rich and poor together.”* God’s revealed word or will is the only sure directory for the guidance of man in all his ways and works ; and is as necessary to be attended to by the whole community for the national wel-

* Ps. xlix. 1, 2.

fare, as it ought to be observed for the safety of the individual sinner, or the salvation of the immortal soul. Having ascertained this point, the way is now open for consulting—

III. The *benefit* and *advantages* of following that rule, and abiding by that direction.

The subject before us is of no inferior consideration. In whatever view we regard it, we can take no lower stand than that of paramount importance. A rule thus provided may never be regarded as the dead letter of some useless record. It is a living law, and therefore pregnant with sure blessings when devoutly adhered to, and certain wrath when disregarded or thrown aside.* Now the benefit and advantages of abiding by the light of divine truth are incalculably great; and some of them may be thus briefly and distinctly pointed out. Taking the word of God for our rule in all things—

1. We shall have *a sure guide* for the direction of our steps.

God cannot err. Whatever he enjoins or commands is right, because he does it. The testimony of the Lord is as *sure*, making wise the simple, as the statutes of the Lord are *right*,

* Lev. xxvi. ; Deut. xxviii.

rejoicing the heart, or as the commandments of the Lord are *pure*, enlightening the eyes.* And is not this a most desirable blessing indeed? Who can estimate the benefit, or describe the advantage, of having the sure word of the infallible God for the guide of our goings, and the warrant and measure of our hopes? Look round the wide world; how dark and uncertain is everything where that light does not shine, and that truth is not known? Wise men are fools, and mighty men fall backward! Wavering uncertainty, mad presumption, unstable hesitation, or dark unbelief and gloomy despair, encircle the whole horizon! Not a ray of light can you see, nor a beam of hope discover, on the right hand or the left. Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people. All accountable unto God! all gliding down the stream of life, and hastening on to the boundless shores of eternity! and none able to see with precision any one thing before him, nor even to conjecture aright how to attain the state of immortal bliss! or what will be his ultimate end at last, excepting as a guilty conscience may present to his appalled anticipations "a certain fearful looking for of

* Psalm xix. 7—11.

judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries !” What a blessing, then, is God’s written word, containing his revealed will ! How should we love and prize it above gold and precious stones ! How should we bind it to our hearts, and entreat its good and gracious Giver to write it deep in our inmost souls ! Here everything is sure ; everything is certain. Here is no fraud, no deception, no cunningly devised fable. Abiding by this rule, we cannot err ; walking in this path, we shall not stray. Every line of its sacred revelation sheds forth a heavenly lustre to mark the path that leads to life and peace. Oh ! then, “ my son, let them not depart from thine eyes : keep sound wisdom and discretion. So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid : yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.”* God’s word affords a sure guide for the direction of all our steps.

* Prov. iii. 21—26.

2. We shall find *everything plain* before us.

As the word of God is true, so is it equally plain. There is no doubt nor uncertainty in any of its declarations. Whatever ambiguity there may appear to be arises from our ignorance, and not from any defect in the revelation itself; and what we want is, the Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth. "My words," speaks the voice of Wisdom, "are all plain to him that understandeth;" and "the vision" is so constructed, "that he may run that readeth."* Everything concerning the present and eternal welfare of men is here plainly set forth. Do I inquire after the duty which the creature owes his Creator? Here I find it—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself." Would I ascertain in what the real welfare and true happiness of the immortal soul consist? Here I find it—"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Am I anxious to know in what way, as a sinner, I can be saved? Here, again, I am told in the plainest terms,—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to

* Prov. viii. 9; Hab. ii. 2.

save sinners." Do I wish to know how all my sorrows may be sanctified, and all my afflictions work for my good? Such a passage as this assures me—"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose." Is my anxiety exercised upon the near approach of death and the great day of judgment, and how I may go down into my grave in peace, and come forth at last to eternal rest and glory? That word again assures me, that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life; and he that believeth in him hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." In all these great and important particulars, the veil is removed, "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Do I extend my inquiries, and seek after the will of God concerning my relative and social obligations? Here, again, with regard to them all, I am told, that they are to be done "in the Lord"—"as unto Christ"—"knowing that we have a Master in heaven." Do I wish to be instructed in the way in which all reciprocal intercourse is to be carried on in the business and affairs of life? What a beautiful epitome am I presented with from the pen of the in-

spired apostle!—"Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."* Am I a minister of Christ? I hear the apostle saying to me, "I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom: Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."† Do I belong to the congregation? How thrilling the exhortation—"Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it!"‡ Here, again, everything is plain. So, also, if I inquire into the duties of magistrates, legislators, or princes, I am told, with equal precision and clearness, "Judge right-

* Rom. xiii. 8—10.

† 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

‡ Heb. iv. 1.

ously between every man and his brother." "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."* What a blessing, then, is the plain word of God, which tells every man, from the highest to the lowest, not only how he may be saved, but how he is to walk and to please God, and abound more and more!

3. We shall avoid the *grievous mistakes and blunders* into which others have fallen.

When vain man would be wise above, or without, what is written, he sooner or later betrays a stupidity which would be disgraceful even to the brutes that perish. Alas! this is no unusual occurrence, no uncommon calamity! How many are there of whom it may be said, "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them!"† How many commit those "two great evils:" like Israel of old, "they have forsaken *me*, (saith the Lord,) the fountain of living waters; and they have hewed out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water!"‡ How often do we see "the wise taken in their own craftiness!"

* Deut. i. 16; Amos, v. 24; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

† Jer. viii. 9.

‡ Jer. ii. 13.

—the tokens of the liars frustrated—diviners made mad—the disputers of this world involved in their own devices—and their knowledge made foolish !*—some “roaring” in their perplexities like bears—others “groping” for the wall like blind men—and others “stumbling” in noon-day !† Do you ask the cause ? The Lord hath poured contempt upon them ; they have forsaken him, and he hath cast them off to wander and perish in their own delusions ! To how many, besides the nation of Israel, does that striking expostulation apply, in Jer. ii. 5—12 ? “ Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain ? Neither said they, Where is the Lord ? The *priests* said not, Where is the Lord ? and they that handle the *law* knew me not : the *pastors* also transgressed against me, and the *prophets* prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children’s children will I plead.” Now, by taking the Lord’s word for our guide, we shall *avoid* all those evils into which others have been drawn.

* Is. xliv. 25, 26.

† Isaiah, lix. 9—15.

We shall be wise where others are brutish. We shall stand where others fall. We shall advance in the right path, where others wander, stumble, are snared and taken. We shall have light, when others are in darkness. We shall have confidence and firm support, when others are in distress and misery, and everything is shaking and sinking around them. In our own souls; in the discharge of our social duties; in our intercourse with others; whether we fill a high or a humble station among men; if we take God's word for the joy of our heart, and the guide of our goings, building upon its gracious promises, and conforming to its holy precepts, both as a nation and as individuals—we shall not only avoid the snares and traps into which others have fallen; but we shall be blessed—blessed in our bodies and our souls—blessed in our basket and our store—blessed in our going out and coming in—blessed both now and for ever!”*

4. We shall find *abundant provision for every emergency.*

That godliness which is revealed in the scriptures “is profitable for *all* things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that

* Deut. xxviii. 1—14.

which is to come." Furnished with such a guide, it must be used with universal application. Nations as well as individuals, for their temporal as well as their eternal welfare, should make that word the standard of their works, as well as the foundation of their hopes, without adulteration or change. Nor in the enactment or execution of laws may men presume to be rigorous where God is merciful; indifferent where God is decisive; or lenient where God is just. In all civil jurisprudence, and throughout the whole criminal code, God's revealed will must be the measure and authority of both. If God have said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" let it be so. If with the most righteous sanctions, God have enjoined "the sabbath day to be kept holy,"* or commanded "that the adulterer and blasphemer shall surely be put to death,"† that must be a most profligate and abandoned legislation which would contravene these divine injunctions, and presume to regard with less abhorrence crimes which are stamped with such foul enormity in the records of heaven. God's revealed will must pervade the whole; nor can you well conceive.

* Ex. xxxi. 14.

† Lev. xx. 10, and xxiv. 16.

a case which, either in the letter or spirit, is not embraced within the sphere of the divine word. Forgery is not, indeed, expressly condemned in holy writ: but who does not perceive that it comes under the name of *theft*, or *fraud*, and is to be dealt with accordingly. And so of all other cases and emergencies which may arise, taking the divine law for our guide, we shall find a safe and abundant provision. Laws of this description will be, like the path of duty or the way of salvation, always the same; never to be dispensed with, and never to be repealed. A floating legislation argues a vast amount of unsound principle; and when the truth of God is swerved from, nothing but measures of such a description can be expected to follow as the obvious and necessary result. This will account for all the blundering, contradiction, absurdity, folly, childishness, and impiety, which mark the course of the general statesmen of the day. Wicked men cannot be expected to enact good laws; men that fear not God, in their legislative capacity will no more promote that fear, than they do personally in their own souls, or in their private conversation. Contingency can never afford a safe foundation for the erection of a

solid legal structure. Sound law must spring from, and be conformable to, God's supreme dominion, and man's universal responsibility; and where these are wanting as the basis of authority, whatever appearances there may be of a beneficial enactment, they are hollow and fallacious. And, oh! how fearful the condition of any nation or people, when, as a punishment for their disregard of the divine authority, the Lord says, "I will take away the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet; and the prudent, and the ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give *children* to be their princes, and *babes* shall rule over them!" Can we wonder, when this is the case, that "the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour; that the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable?" Is not this the case with our own nation? Why is this? Hear the divine lamentation pointing out the sad cause. "O my people, they which

lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.”* Now, taking the divine will for our guide, we shall find a sure direction in every step, and an abundant provision for every case.

5. We shall be *safe and prosperous here, and happy and blessed hereafter*.

As no man will ever perish in his sins who makes the provisions of God's word the foundation of his hopes; so no nation or people will be made the monuments of God's displeasure which hearkens to that gracious call, “O house of Israel, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”† It will be with nations, in this respect, as with men's souls; they will rise or fall, flourish or decay, in exact proportion as God's authority is honoured, and his laws and statutes are loved and obeyed. Our own insular position, at the present moment, affords a striking opportunity, every day, of witnessing the truth of this remark. We stand in the midst of a twofold instance of this encouraging and awakening truth. On the one hand, *France* discarded the records of the divine will; on the other, *Ireland* adulterated or kept them back. But *infidel* France and *popish* Ireland are both

* Is. iii. 1—5, and 12.

† Is. ii. 5.

under the scourge of Heaven, eating the fruit of their own ways, and filled with their own devices. Oh! England, think of these things! Hast thou eyes to see, or ears to hear, or a heart to understand? We tremble for thy welfare and safety. The same blighting, blasting influence, which hath smitten others with the vengeance of God, is deeply working in thee; and leading thee, with a fearful rapidity, to the same tremendous precipice, from whence others have been plunged, as yet, to rise no more! Already have numbers of thy legislators and statesmen cast off the fear and the word of God; and others are courting a near alliance with "the beast" of Rome; ready to throw off the mask, did the opportunity offer, and present their oblations at the Virgin's shrine, with the voluntary surrender of everything that is near and dear to us, as a nation and people, to papal domination! And canst thou be blessed—canst thou prosper, while *this* is the case? No. Or if thou roll in riches and revel in luxury and power, canst thou regard thyself as under the approbation of the Almighty? Oh! no. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. What, though thy commerce spread and thy wealth increase—cannot God set a wicked na-

tion, where he often sets a wicked *sinner* ? in the slippery places of an impious prosperity, as a prelude to an utter and irretrievable prostration !* Then think of thy danger, repent of thy sins, and amend thy ways. For aught we can say to the contrary, because "thou hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this ; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven," God may have numbered thee, as he did Babylon of old, and brought thy dominion near to its close !† Oh ! if thou wouldst escape such a condemnation, and be blessed with the approval of Heaven, there is but one course for thy adoption and pursuit. The charge of Joshua is given to thee ; to thee, as well as to Israel of old, the Lord speaks, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do, according to all that is written therein ; for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success."

If, then, the revealed will of God be the only safe rule for individual guidance, as well as the only legitimate authority for all national law—

* Psalm lxxiii. 18—20. † Dan. v. 22, 23, & 26.

1. What an *invaluable deposit* are the sacred scriptures committed to any nation or people !

But here let others speak as well as ourself. Our forefathers well knew the value of the sacred volume ; hear their words:—" What piety without truth ? What truth (what saving truth) without the word of God ? What word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the scripture ?" The scriptures we are commanded to search.* They are commended that searched and studied them.† They are reprov'd that were unskilful in them, or slow to believe them.‡ They can make us wise unto salvation.§ If we be ignorant, they will instruct us ; if out of the way, they will bring us home ; if out of order, they will reform us ; if in heaviness, comfort us ; if dull, quicken us ; if cold, inflame us. The scriptures, then, being acknowledged to be so full and so perfect, how can we excuse ourselves of negligence, if we do not study them, of curiosity, if we be not content with them ? Men talk much of the *philosopher's stone*, that it turneth copper into gold ; of *cornucopia*, that it had all things necessary for food in it ; of

* John, v. 39 ; Is. viii. 20. † Acts, xvii. 11 ; viii. 28, 29.

‡ Matt. xxii. 29 ; Luke, xxiv. 25. § 2 Tim. iii. 15.

panacea, the herb, that it was good for all diseases ; of *catholicon*, the drug, that it is instead of all purges ; of *Vulcan's armour*, that it was proof against all thrusts, and all blows, &c. &c. Well, that which they falsely, or vainly attributed to these things for bodily good, we may justly, and with full measure, apply to the scripture for spiritual. It is not only an armour, but also a whole armory of weapons, both offensive and defensive, whereby we may save ourselves, and put the enemy to flight. It is not a herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine. It is not a pot of manna, or a cruise of oil, which is for memory only, or for a meal's meat or two, but, as it were, a shower of heavenly bread, sufficient for a whole host, be it never so great ; and, as it were, a whole cellar full of oil vessels, whereby all our necessities may be provided for, and all our debts discharged. In a word, it is a panary of wholesome food, against fenowed traditions ; a physician's shop of preservatives, against poisoned heresies ; a pandect of *profitable laws*, against *rebellious spirits* ; a treasury of most costly jewels, against beggarly rudiments ; finally, a

fountain of most pure water springing up into everlasting life. And what marvel? the original thereof being from heaven, and not from earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the apostles or prophets; the penmen such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's spirit; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation, &c. &c.; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that never shall fade away. Happy is the man that delighteth in the scripture, and thrice happy he that meditateth in it day and night!"*

2. How *widely have we departed* from these sacred rules!

No man can open his eyes for a moment, or consider the state of things around him, without perceiving that this is the case. Whether we

* Translators' Preface to the Bible.

consider men's outward walk and conversation, as individuals or members of the community, the hopes which they avow in reference to their souls, or the principles on which they act in the several positions which they respectively occupy in the order of society,—the melancholy fact is too plain to be doubted. In thousands and thousands of cases, the revealed will of God is either disbelieved and denied, or its authority is discarded and rejected. Nor is this confined to a single class, or a single individual; more or less, in some way or other, it pervades all orders, and all degrees, from the highest to the lowest; from the filthy roar of the common pot-house, to the splendid palace, the festive banquet, and the royal throne. Yes, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!" even in our own land,—even in our own professedly Christian country,—even in the grand assembly of the nation, and in the royal speech from the throne,—we have lived to hear the very name of the Almighty bandied about as the theme of atheistical mockery; the truth of Heaven, urged in opposition to papal claims, laughed and jeered by lordly dukes, and princely nobles; and the very mention of a divine superintending Providence blotted out from the records of our national deliverances and

triumphs! and that, too, by those who, on the one hand, avow themselves the best friends of the people, and, on the other, are anxious to be considered as the firm supporters of our established institutions; and who, above all others, have the greatest cause for acknowledging such a power, and giving the Almighty the honour due to his name! * Can we suppose that such an insult may be thrown upon the Majesty of heaven with impunity? “Shall I not *visit* for these things, saith the Lord; shall not my soul be *avenged* on such a nation as this?” † What a wonderful and horrible thing must this be

* The circumstances to which the author here alludes, as well as the occasions which called them forth, must be fresh in the recollection of all who, observing the general course of measures and events, cannot but feel a lively anxiety for the probable issue in the retributive order of the Divine government as exercised over nations and men. Those things which some persons would deem trivial or unimportant, often constitute a crisis in a nation's destinies and career. Even that great and good man Hezekiah, when, after a remarkable deliverance, he “rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him,” brought “wrath upon himself and upon Judah and Jerusalem,” because “his heart was lifted up.” (See 2 Kings, xx. 12—19; and 2 Chron. xxxii. 22—26, 31.) Oh! that we might hearken and be wise! and that they to whom the reference is made might be humbled, like him, for their sin, and repent of their iniquities!

† Jer. v. 29.

when committed in *any* land, and especially in *our own*! There are those in the higher walks of life at whose door this sin lieth; there it has been wearing a frowning aspect for years; we have never heard that it has been repented of; nor do we know but that the same scenes may be acted over again, and the guilt ten thousand times increased by the repetition of the offence after a lengthened, but unimproved period afforded for timely consideration. *Infidels* are consistent when they act in such a blasphemous manner; but it is most shockingly impious when the infidel spirit is breathed by a professing *Christian*. "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments," says God, "*then* had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea, &c.!"*

3. How needful it is that we should make these holy scriptures *our constant study* and *daily counsellors*! Again let us hearken unto the voice of our forefathers before alluded to:—"Ye are brought unto the fountains of living water which ye digged not; do not cast earth into them with the Philistines, neither prefer

* Is. xlviii. 18, 19.

broken pits to them with the wretched Jews. Oh, receive not so great things in vain ! Oh, despise not so great salvation ! Be not like swine, to tread under foot so precious things ; neither yet like dogs, to tear and abuse holy things. Say not to our Saviour, with the Gergesenes, ‘ Depart out of our coasts ; ’ neither yet, with Esau, ‘ sell your birthright for a mess of pottage. ’ If light be come unto the world, love not darkness more than light ; if food, if clothing, be offered, go not naked,—starve not yourselves. Remember the advice of Nazianzene :—*‘ It is a grievous thing to neglect a great fair, and to seek to make markets afterwards ; ’* and the admonition and menacing of Augustine :—*‘ They that despise God’s will inviting them, shall feel God’s will taking vengeance on them. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ; but a blessed thing it is (and will bring us to everlasting blessedness in the end) when God speaketh unto us, to hearken,—when he setteth his word before us, to read it,—when he stretcheth out his hand and calleth,—to answer, Here am I, here are we, to do thy will, O God. ’*

“The Lord work a care and conscience in

us," (both as a nation and people,) "to know him and serve him ; that we may be acknowledged of him at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ ! to whom, with the Holy Ghost, be all praise and thanksgiving, Amen."

SERMON X.

THE POSITIVE OBLIGATION OF ALL WHO HAVE RECEIVED
THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD TO YIELD CONFORMITY
TO IT, AS THE ONLY SURE DIRECTORY FOR ALL PER-
SONAL ACTION, AND THE ONLY SOLID BASIS FOR ALL
NATIONAL POLICY AND LAW.

ISAIAH, I. 19, 20.

*“ If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of
the land. But if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be de-
voured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath
spoken it.”*

It seems almost impossible for any person to read the contents of this chapter with any degree of attention without perceiving the awful condition of those who are immediately concerned, and the propriety of the message with which they are addressed. On the one hand we behold the most alarming and abounding iniquities—reaching up to the heavens, and calling down deserved vengeance upon the guilty perpetrators; on the other, we see the most

astonishing forbearance, coupled with the tenderest compassion and loving-kindness. Though provoked to destroy his guilty people, the Lord condescends to reason and expostulate with them, and points out the means by which, notwithstanding all that was past, they might be spared and forgiven. This is that "goodness of God," which ought to lead wicked sinners and wicked nations to a timely repentance.

The prophet is addressing Israel of old. Once they had been a "goodly vine;" but, alas! they were now become "a degenerate plant." Their state and condition are most touchingly described. More insensible than the brutes, they neither knew nor considered from whence all their blessings came, nor whom they were bound to obey. Instead of being devoted to the Lord, they were now sunk down into the most alarming and degrading impieties. The holy seer addresses them as a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters;" and the bitter root of all these evils was this,—they had "*forsaken the Lord, provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, and gone away backward.*" And although they were suffering, in many respects, some of the fearful consequences of their sins,

yet they were neither alarmed nor humbled ; they were neither concerned for their danger, nor anxious to be delivered from the Almighty's wrath. On the contrary they were become most hardened in their wicked ways ; their behaviour was most insulting in the eyes of the Lord ; they pretended to honour him with the lifeless ceremonies of a mere formal worship, whilst their hearts were alienated from him, and their works were utterly displeasing in his sight.

Well might the prophet exclaim, " Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth !" Well might he address them as " the rulers of Sodom, and the people of Gomorrah !" Well might he ask in that unanswerable manner—" To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord ?" Well might he affirm, speaking in the Lord's name—" They are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them." And what other determination from the Most High could they expect than this—" When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" ? Why ? why will the Lord deal in this manner with this people ? " Your hands are full of blood," &c. &c.

Would they then escape these calamities, and

be delivered from these threatenings? There is but one way in which this may be done. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." And to shew them that, bad as their case might be, there was still hope of forgiveness, if they hearkened to the voice of mercy now sent to them; and to leave them for ever without excuse, if they persisted in their evil ways, and turned a deaf ear to the message—the prophet entreats them, in the most earnest manner, to consider these things in time, and to act according to their urgent necessity and awakening importance. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" adding, in the words of the text, "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Now it is plain that the text, involving the great truth which it evidently implies, is the sanction with which the whole of the chapter is

enforced. Why did the prophet address them in this manner? Why did he charge them with having forsaken the Lord? Why did he denounce such heavy woes for their great offences? Why did he thus invite them to seek the mercy of God; and plainly tell them what would be the certain consequences of hearkening to, or disobeying, his voice? It was not merely on account of their sins and danger, and what would be the happy result of their experience of God's pardoning mercy. Great and unanswerable as were these considerations, there was yet another thing which gave validity and vast importance to the whole. *Israel had received the lively oracles of the living God.* "The Lord had sent his word unto Jacob, and it had lighted upon Israel." They were the people, as St. Paul speaks,* "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It is evident, therefore, that, having received that revealed will of God, they were *bound to conform*

* Rom. ix. 4, 5.

to it in every respect, in which, as accountable beings, they were answerable to him for all their ways and works. This would, of course, embrace not only their *individual*, but their *national* concerns. All must be regulated according, and in subserviency, to that revelation. Hence the prophet addresses them in the text—"If ye be willing and obedient," &c. &c. If you *hearken* to that will, if you *obey* that voice, you shall be blessed, as a nation and people, in your bodies and souls, in this world and in the next. But if you do not; if you *disregard* the will of the Lord; if you *reject* his word; if you *turn from* his statutes, you will provoke his hot displeasure; you will bring down his curse upon your land, and his wrath upon your souls. You shall be devoured with the sword—the sword of your enemies here, and the sword of his justice hereafter, and that too for ever. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

A most important truth springs out of these remarks, as applicable to ourselves as to Israel of old, in close connexion with our previous discourses, which, by the divine blessing, we intend to make the subject of our present meditations—viz.,

I. That it is the positive duty and bounden

obligation of all who have received the revealed will of God, whether nations or individuals, to abide by that will,—as well in the regulation of their faith and practice, as in the order and management of their affairs, and in the formation and execution of their laws ; and to admit of no other principle, and to walk by no other rule whatsoever.

II. The consequences of adhering to, or swerving from, such a revelation in either respect.

III. Meet some objections which may be urged in opposition to these remarks.

We stay not now to draw the parallel between our own nation, in this respect, and ancient Israel. Highly favoured, as they were, we are deeply guilty, as they have been. It is only to change the word *Israel* into *Britain*, and the whole chapter will depict our own guilt, with a fearful application. And if so, the great truth implied in the text is as binding upon ourselves at the present day as it was upon them to whom it was originally propounded. The doctrine, then, immediately before us is this—viz.,

I. That it is the positive duty and bounden obligation of all who have received the revealed will of God, whether nations or individuals, to

abide by that will—as well in the regulation of their faith and practice, as in the order and management of their affairs, and in the formation and execution of their laws for the general welfare ; and to admit of no other principle, and to walk by no other rule whatsoever.

One should suppose that the truth of such a proposition must be apparent to all observers ; and that it would meet with the most hearty concurrence, and encounter no hostility or opposition whatsoever ; at least from those who admit the necessity of such a revelation, and are ready to acknowledge the advantages of walking according to such a rule. But, alas ! the case is not so. We live in an age of contradictions and deceits, as well as absurdities and delusions. Not only are avowed *infidels*, as a matter of course, opposed to such a principle ; but even many professing *Christians* would start at the proposition, and shrink from the approach of its salutary influence. We must therefore, for the sake of the general utility, enter upon its more extended development.

Let it be admitted, as we have already proved, that man stands in *need* of such a revelation for the measure of his steps and the foundation of his hopes ; that nothing but such a revelation

may meet the *exigences of his case*; and that such a provision can only come from *God*—and the obligation of yielding conformity to it immediately appears. Every consideration which conducts us to such an issue, evinces the unalterable claims which it puts forth. But we will follow another course of elucidation.

Let us suppose the case of a *single individual* favoured with the revealed word or will of God. Will any person undertake to say, that that individual is not bound to follow it in all his ways and works? Can he safely cherish any hope which that word does not authorize, or walk in any way which that word does not sanction and put forth? Does not his responsibility to God—as his creature,—does not his condition as a sinner—bind him to the believing and practical observance of his revealed truth and will?

Again, let us suppose this single individual increased *into a family*, or a little community, more or less in number. It matters not whether that number may be two, or three, or five, or ten, or twenty, or fifty;—can it ever be supposed that the whole bulk of that family, considered in its collective capacity, is less bound to observe the revealed will of God than each of them is under that obligation, individually considered?

Is not each of them the creature of God? Has not each of them an immortal soul? Is not each of them a guilty sinner? Does not each of them need a Saviour? Must not each of them die? Must not each of them appear in judgment before God? Besides which, has not each of them interests to attend to, and duties to perform, from which nothing can release them, and which nothing but God's revealed will clearly points out both in their origin, measure, end, and importance? Are they not, then, bound to walk by that rule, and to live according to that will?

Extend the idea. Transfer the consideration of such a family to a *larger number*,—to a nation—kingdom—empire. Now what do we understand when we speak of a nation, kingdom, or empire? Not the length and breadth of its statistical dimensions; not the number of square acres or miles which it contains; but rather the amount of human, rational, and accountable beings comprised within its limits. Devoid of such occupants, any given portion of the earth must be regarded as a waste wilderness, and not as blessed with social life; or as a savage desert, unless brought under the influence of those laws and regulations which alone

may ensure the beneficial advantages of civilized intercourse. Now, what is a nation, thus constituted, but *one vast family*?—composed of a greater number of individuals than that before specified, each of whom stands in the same relation to the ever blessed God, is in the same condition, and is invested with the same liabilities, as the single individual, or the little household, already alluded to? Then are they not, one and all, bound to conform to that holy word, or revealed will, which God hath been pleased to vouchsafe for the guidance of their steps, and the measure of their hopes? Do not the same considerations which apply to any one of them, apply to them all? Are they not therefore all bound to abide by that revelation which is incumbent upon each individual? And must not that obligation extend to the whole length and breadth of the responsible character under which they stand? We conceive that must be a very dangerous doctrine which would question or deny a truth so palpable as this.

But further. We cannot think of a family, whether great or small, without the necessary appendages of *precedence, influence, and authority*. A single individual may stand alone; but a family cannot—a nation cannot. In a

family, however small, there must be a head, and there must be members;—parents, for instance, and children; or master, or mistress, and servants. Hence a higher claim for such conformity to God's revealed will arises; and as the one is engaged to use his influence in enforcing that obligation, so is the other equally bound to hearken and obey. This applies as much to the relation subsisting between parent and child, as between master and servant. When the Lord commends Abraham for the discharge of his duties in obedience to his revealed will, he says, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."* This is an admirable pattern, worthy of universal imitation. But is it not clear, that the same obligation might extend to any number, however large, brought within the sphere of social compact? And would not a distinctive gradation, similar to that which is found in the little circle above alluded to, where only the relation be-

* Gen. xviii. 19.

tween parent and child, or master and servant, is known, necessarily prevail, upon a larger scale, throughout such a community, though existing under different denominations, and invested with different degrees of ability and precedence? Would not each step in such an order of things carry along with it a corresponding degree of responsible power or influence? And in all these cases, must not therefore the bounden duty of conforming to God's revealed will, in every respect, lie in one vast insurmountable load upon the whole? Can any one individual throughout the whole body of the nation, with safety or impunity, take a single step, cherish a single hope, adopt a single sentiment, or frame a single law, independently of, or in opposition to, God's holy and heavenly will? We may safely entrust the answer to be given to this inquiry to the bosom of every person who calmly investigates the subject, or who is brought under the influence of that divine will, and lives under the happy sway of such an high authority.

But, not to insist further upon these general considerations at present, there are other topics which may be called in to our aid in enforcing

the great proposition laid down for the first part of this discourse ; some of which we shall here separately adduce.

1. Consider *whose revelation it is*, for a devout and universal conformity to which we plead.

It is not the word, nor the will, of man. It is the revealed will of God. It does not contain the opinions or maxims of this or that person, however wise or great ; nor of this or that party, however numerous or mighty. It declares the truth of God. It is the will of the Most High. It is the word of Him who cannot err ; whose will is perfect rectitude ; and who can require nothing but what is absolutely good in itself, and equally conducive to the welfare of all concerned. In short, it is the word of Him with whom we have to do ; who made us ; who preserves us ; against whom we have sinned ; who alone can bless us ; to whom we must answer for all our ways and works ; and before whom we must all ultimately appear, to receive our final award from his hands. Ought not, then, such a will as this to be obeyed ? Ought not such a revelation to be received, believed, and practised, by every one in particular, as well as by ten thousand in the whole ; and as

much by so many thousands or millions, as by so many units or tens? Ought not the voice of a nation, as well as that of a small family, or a single soul, to be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—"Teach me the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end"—"The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver"?* Surely, we must never admit that any person, or any number of persons, favoured with such a revelation from Heaven, may be considered in possession of a right and becoming frame of mind, or living in a proper course of action, unless this be the case.

2. Consider *for what purpose* God has been pleased to make known his mind and will to us.

Now the purpose for which God has been pleased to make known his mind and will to us is, not to feed our pride, amuse our curiosity, or gratify our vain imaginations. Quite the reverse. It is to inform us, to guide us, to instruct us in the way wherein we should go. It is to teach us to glorify God and serve our generation. It is to direct us how to be happy here, and how to be blessed hereafter. It is to afford every immortal being favoured with such a reve-

* Psalm cxix. 33, 72.

lation from Heaven a safe rule in all his ways and works, both in his individual, relative, and public character, for the direction of his steps and the measure of his hopes. It is to shew the creature how to glorify his Maker, and attend to the welfare of his immortal soul. It is to shew the sinner the way of mercy and peace; to teach the miserable how to be happy; to tell how the gloomy path of death may be passed in safety; and to point out the road to a blessed and glorious immortality. And is there no obligation to conform to, and abide by, such a revelation of the divine will as this? Moreover, the object of this revelation is to teach every person, in the situation in which he is placed, how to discharge the various duties which are claimed at his hands. It is to teach husbands to love their wives, and wives to honour and obey their husbands; to teach parents to love and instruct their children in the fear of the Lord, and children to honour and obey their parents; to teach masters to be kind and just to their servants, and servants to be diligent and faithful to their masters. It is to teach princes and rulers, in all the gradations of government, how to preside over their people; and subjects how to honour and obey their governors. In short, it is to

teach *every* man, in *every* condition of life, whether high or low, rich or poor, how to order and conduct his behaviour as it becomes himself, may be useful to others, and honourable and pleasing in the sight of God. And is not every person bound to *obey* this divine word, and to *walk* in this divine light? Are not nations, as well as individuals, under the same obligation; and all, from the highest to the lowest, required to measure their hopes and direct their steps according to its unerring dictates and heavenly directions? How otherwise can they prosper? How otherwise can they be blessed? How can they be safe; how can they expect to find the mercy of God here, or enter into his kingdom hereafter?

3. Take also into the account, *the wonderful adaptation* of this heavenly will to all our wants and circumstances.

God's revealed word does not suit merely this or that person; it suits all. It does not merely speak to this or that person; it speaks to all. It does not merely shew what this or that man owes to God; but what all owe to him. It does not merely inform us what this or that man is, or stands in need of, or how this or that person only may be saved; but what all are, what

all stand in need of, and how all, who would enter the kingdom of heaven, may and must seek and find that blessing. So, likewise, in all the various relations and conditions of life, that word points out, not only what is incumbent upon this or that class, or rank, or station, in particular; but what is incumbent upon all classes, and is required of persons of all ranks and stations, throughout the whole empire. There is not a single duty required, nor act of obedience to be rendered, from the throne to the cottage, but is substantially, at least, if not clearly, pointed out, and distinctly enforced, in the sacred volume. It is this wonderful adaptation of its laws and requirements, its precepts and promises, its denunciations and threatenings, to our several conditions and complex circumstances, which constitutes the chief excellency of God's revealed will, and proves it to be the genuine boon of its bountiful giver. A whole nation, nay, a whole world, may as safely take that word for their guide as a single family or separate individual; and following such a direction, none should stumble among them all. Does not this very circumstance, therefore, tend to exhibit the force and obligation of yielding this conformity still more

strongly than the preceding observations, binding and unanswerable as they are? Can any nation upon earth, or any individual among the whole human race, be at liberty to disregard that revelation, or tread its holy authority and wise injunctions under foot? “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

4. Add to these, *the deplorable condition of man without such a light from Heaven* to order his steps and cheer his hopes.

That we need such a revelation from above, we have already seen; and that nothing but an oracle coming from God can meet our case, we have already discovered. Then what must be our state and condition without such a guide, and being destitute of such a provision? Can any one justly conceive of such a state? Can any one form the least adequate idea of such a condition? Wild, turbulent, vitiated, depraved, as man universally is become by the fall—the sport of every temptation, and the prey of every corruption and evil propensity—surrounded by the most urgent necessities—bound to the performance of the most imperious duties—invested with the most strict and awful responsibilities—the workmanship of God—endued with an immortal soul—a guilty, perishing sinner—

involved in innumerable calamities—with death before him, and judgment and eternity in view—having but a short time to spend in the acquisition of the most important blessings—engaged to glorify God and serve his generation—with heaven or hell as the certain upshot of his course, and that too, for ever and ever—and yet without a guide to direct his steps, or a course marked out for his pursuit!—left to his own surmises, or to follow his own imaginations, without any sure hope, or any certain refuge, to which he may flee! How deplorably wretched, how unspeakably miserable, must be such a condition as this! Suppose it were the case but of any one single individual—how sad, how distressing the thought! But suppose it were the case of a whole nation at large, and how is that sad consideration deepened, especially when we call to mind the multiplied misery which must necessarily ensue upon the extension of so fearful and tremendous a calamity! Ought not, then, that revelation with which God hath been pleased to favour us to be received as the greatest boon from heaven? Ought it not to be cordially welcomed, devoutly cherished, and faithfully adhered to, both by nations and individuals, in all their ways and works? Ought it not to be made

the grand charter of their privileges, and the unfailing source of their laws, as well as the sure foundation of their hopes ?

5. Once more. What additional force do we derive for the claims of this truth from the consideration *that it is by God's revealed will we shall all be judged at last !*

It is impossible, in the very nature of things, but that an accountable being, as man is, must one day be brought to reckon with God. Nor is it less certain that there must be some rule by which that process will be ordered ; and that rule as just in itself, as equitable and correct in its final application. As " God will bring everything, even every secret thing, into judgment," so will he arraign every person before him, and call upon each one in particular, as well as the whole world at large, to " give an account of thy stewardship." Were any one passed over, or winked at, on account of any earthly consideration whatsoever, such a " respect of persons" would thereby be established that it could no longer be asked, " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" But this never may be the case ; no such principle shall ever be established ; no such injustice shall ever be practised. Now on this subject we are

not left to the mere surmises of a dark uncertainty. In that revealed will which God has been pleased to send us, we are distinctly informed both of the certainty of the final day of judgment, and of the rule, measure, or process, by which it will be conducted. We are told, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained (Jesus Christ the Lord); whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* We are told, that in that day "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;"† and that in that day "every one shall give account of himself unto God." We are also assured by Him who is appointed of the Father to be the judge of quick and dead, that "the word which I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day."‡ It is clear from these and similar passages, that we are not left to the mere surmises of a dark uncertainty concerning these things. Every one to whom that

* Acts, xvii. 31.

† John, v. 28, 29.

‡ John, xii. 48.

word comes must know, or ought to know, that such is the case; and, if he do not, the fact remains still the same in all its unerring assurance, and in all its decisive and everlasting consequences; nor can ignorance, on the one hand, nor unbelief, on the other, make the least change in either respect. Ought not, then, every one to consider in time how he shall be able to meet his Maker, and to stand before his Judge? Ought not the king, the prince, the nobleman, the legislator, the statesman, the judge, the officer, the warrior, the orator, the merchant, the tradesman, the esquire, the farmer, the artisan, the mechanic, the labourer, the prelate, the pastor, the private individual, the public character, the master, the servant, the husband, the wife, the parent, the child, the brother, the sister, the neighbour, the friend,—in short, ought not all, from the greatest to the least, seriously to lay this solemn truth to heart, and earnestly to inquire, each one for himself—“What shall I do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?” And, if God have been pleased to make known his mind and will in this respect, telling us the way in which alone we may obtain his favour and serve him acceptably, both publicly and pri-

vately, as a nation at large, or as mere individuals in particular, ought we not to take that word for our rule and guide in all respects, and never suffer it to depart out of our mouth all our days? Surely we ought so to do. Surely such ought to be the case. Surely nothing can be more reasonable, equitable, or binding, than such an obligation. And surely he that disregards that revealed will or law of God, casts off its authority, and deems himself at liberty to live and act as he likes, thinking that no harm will ensue, or that all will end well at last—whether such a being be a mere unit, or multiplied into tens of thousands—a nation at large, or a single person in particular—incur the greatest possible risk of bringing down the vengeance of God upon himself and his country, and goes the readiest way to deluge the earth with the judgments of Heaven here, and to involve his soul in irretrievable and everlasting destruction hereafter. In all these respects the doctrine of the text stands most striking and conspicuous; “If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

SERMON XI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED.

ISAIAH, I. 19, 20.

“ If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured with the sword : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

THE proposition before us, therefore, is exhibited on the firmest foundations. Whether we consider the divine origin or the gracious character of that revelation with which we are favoured ; the purposes for which it was given, or its wonderful adaptation to our various wants and emergencies ; the deplorable condition of man without such a guide, or the solemn fact that by it we shall all be judged in the last day, and have our eternal destiny fixed according to the tenour of its voice, whether law or grace, judgment or mercy ; it is clear that it is the positive

duty and bounden obligation of all who have received the revealed will of God, whether nations or individuals, to abide by its injunctions—as well in the regulation of their faith and practice, as in the order and management of their affairs, and in the formation and execution of their laws; and to admit of no other principle, and to walk by no other rule whatsoever. Having established this most important truth, we pass on to consider—

II. The *consequences* of adhering to, or swerving from, that divine revelation, in either respect.

Only admit the authority of God's revealed will, and the consequences resulting from its cordial reception, or contemptuous disregard, are immediately apparent. Only admit the validity of the proposition laid down and discussed in the former part of this discourse, and the consequences flowing from adhering to the one, or swerving from the other, burst in upon the mind with an irresistible power. Two things, at least, at once arrest our attention. We can never suppose that God will permit any nation or individual to disbelieve or disregard his word with IMPUNITY; nor may we imagine that he will suffer any nation or individual, obeying its voice,

to go without his BLESSING. We say, these two things must strike the attention of every person who calmly considers this subject, as flowing from the very order and necessity of the case. And further—if this twofold deduction be found to be true, we may advance another step, and remark (for the inference would be equally correct were we to affirm) that, from the proposition thus laid down and established, and from the consideration of its unavoidable appendages in the results necessarily flowing from its positive claims, in respect of obediential regard, or determined hostility manifested towards God's revealed will, as the case may be, there will arise a third fact, equally instructive and alarming. We might infer, that, in the history and experience of nations and individuals thus circumstanced, there will be seen A MIXTURE both of Divine approbation and mercy, and of Divine corrections and judgments, from time to time, according as the will of God might be adhered to or disregarded, in the ways and works of such individuals, or in the policy and government of such nations or kingdoms. For it must never be forgotten that a nation is no more in comparison of the blessed God than a single individual; and that a single individual

will be no more overlooked or forgotten than a nation at large. The same eye sees both; the same arm is stretched out over both; and the same duties are demanded of both. Hence we might justly infer that a man will prosper in his own soul in exact proportion as the hope, promises, and directions of God's word are believed and obeyed, in respect of his salvation from sin, or conversation before men. The candle of the Lord will shine upon or be withdrawn from him, as he either walks in the light of the truth, or by the sparks of his own kindling. Living in the fear of the Lord, and under the comforts of the Holy Ghost, God will multiply him on every side. Forsaking his law, and walking not in his judgments, God will visit his transgressions with the rod, and his iniquities with stripes. And this will continue to be the case, from time to time, as the occasion might be,* in proportion as either cause, in the order of God's general process of dealing with men as accountable beings, produced its obvious effect.

The same remark equally applies to a nation at large. A nation living in the fear of God, we might certainly expect would be blessed;

* Psalm lxxxix. 30—32.

but a nation casting off the fear of God we might as certainly anticipate would fall under his just displeasure. Trouble, vexation, and rebuke, would be its unhappy portion, instead of peace, love, harmony, and concord. Either scale might be supposed to rise and fall, entailing its necessary consequences, in proportion as impiety or godliness preponderated in the national balance. Timely repentance and real amendment might be the means of alleviating or removing national calamities, and restoring national blessings. Grievous crimes and repeated relapsés would incur additional troubles, suspend the Divine complacency and protection, and open every avenue to the inroads of hostile enemies, internal discords, foreign aggressions, and the most humiliating disappointments and defeats. When a nation thus provokes the authority and majesty of heaven, God can arm the whole creation against it, and cause even the most despicable insects, or its most contemptible enemies, to be the means of humbling its pride, and laying its arrogancy low in the dust. Nay, God can so overrule the very plans and projects formed with deep deliberation and consummate skill for its strength and aggrandizement, as to convert them into means of its downfall, and hastening

the very catastrophe which all may be anxious to avert. It is a fearful question: but "who may stand in God's sight when he is angry?" It is an encouraging, but an equally alarming consideration—"When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? And when He hideth his face, who then can behold him?—whether it be done against a nation, or a man only?"*

Israel's history affords a striking illustration of the truth of these remarks. When the Lord would both alarm them on account of their sins, and encourage them to hope in his deliverance, how does he address them, by the mouth of the prophet? "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me!"† But, instead of this, in consequence of their national impiety and disregard of the

* Job, xxxiv. 29.

† Isaiah, xlviii, 17—19.

Lord's word and will, a wretched exile and ignominious captivity lay before them.

Nor could they have been in doubt about this, had they consulted that will of God which he had given them for their direction and good. Even so far back as the days of Moses; even so soon as they had been brought out from the bondage of Egypt, and before they had placed the soles of their feet on the promised land, the Lord had clearly and distinctly pointed out to them, for their future guidance and pursuit, what would be the unspeakable blessedness of hearkening to his word, and what tremendous calamities would overwhelm them if they disregarded his authority. The 26th chapter of Leviticus, and the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, are clear and express on these matters. In the former of which it is said—"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing-time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you

afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” Happy the condition!—safe the security!—high the honour!—glorious the privileges, of such a nation as this!—thus hearkening to the voice of God, and thus obedient to his heavenly will!

But let us attend to the alarming alternative.. “If ye will NOT hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall DESPISE my statutes, or if your soul ABHOR my judgments, so that ye will NOT do all my commandments, but that ye BREAK my covenant; I also will do this unto you: I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning

ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies; they that hate you shall rejoice over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet, for all this, hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass; and your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins.—And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins; and I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins!" &c.

Such is the manner in which the Lord declared he would deal with Israel, according as they should either attend to or disobey his statutes. And was not this word, both of threatening and promise, carried into effect? When they hearkened to the Lord's voice, did they not prosper? When they disobeyed his will, were they not invariably overwhelmed with calamities, and oppressed by their foes? Take a brief survey of their history, and see how true God remained to his word, and how surely obedience was blessed, and disobedience punished. Why did all the hundreds of thousands that came out of Egypt, with a very few exceptions, perish in the wilderness? Because they believed not the word of God, nor hearkened to his voice! * Why was Israel at the first discomfited before Ai? Because they had committed a trespass in the accursed thing, and had departed from the strict injunctions which the Lord had commanded! † Why, after the death of Joshua, and throughout the whole period of their Judges, were they so impoverished, so weakened, so subdued, so oppressed by their enemies, and so repeatedly held in subjection

* Numb. xiv. 1—39.

† Josh. vii. 1—26.

and bondage? Again and again we are told, in almost every chapter of their history, that they had done "evil in the sight of the Lord," and provoked him to anger. This was the cause! Or if you descend a little lower into their historical detail, why were the ten tribes carried away captive into Assyria first, and the remaining portion afterwards into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar? Alas! alas! the cause was still the same. The *former*, by their national apostasy from the true worship of God in the days of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin,"* could not but bring down the vengeance of Heaven sooner or later upon them; and the *latter*, in the course of time, imitating, and even exceeding, the impieties of their brethren, could not but expect a similar doom. How distressingly pathetic is the account of their recorded national sins, impenitence, rebellion, and hardness of heart!† "For so it was, that Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, and did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord

* 1 Kings, xii. 25—33. † See 2 Kings, xvii. 7—23.

to anger—Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, and did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes, and the covenant which he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from out of his sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers,

until he had cast them out of his sight," &c., &c. What a mournful history! What a lamentable record of a nation's ingratitude and guilt, and of the just judgments of God poured out upon it as the inevitable consequence! Oh! let all take warning from Israel and Judah of old, and beware how they provoke the God of heaven and earth to visit them in the same manner!

On the contrary, how were they protected; how were they prospered, when they adhered to God's revealed word and will! Not a man was able to stand before Joshua among all their enemies, because the book of the law departed not from his mouth, and the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel! How victorious was the reign of David, whose delight was in the statutes of his God! How glorious was the reign of Solomon before his grievous lapse took place! How prosperous was the reign of Jehoshaphat! He "sought the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments—therefore the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, and stablished the kingdom in his hand."* How signally was Hezekiah blessed and protected in his day!

* 2 Chron. xvii. 1—6.

“ He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.”*

And are there not other instances of nations, as well as individuals, exhibiting the accuracy of these remarks? Nay, might not our own highly-favoured, but equally wicked and ungrateful land, be adduced as affording the strongest corroboration of the truth now before us? Were we to take the pains of going back, and tracing the history of our national judgments and deliverances, prosperity and adversity, defeats and triumphs, depressions and elevations, from epoch to epoch, and from age to age, would it not be found, that the one or the other hath been our alternate lot in proportion as vital godliness and the fear of the Lord have been cherished or disregarded? Have we been blessed as a nation? It has been when God hath been honoured. Have we been corrected and scourged? It has been when God hath been insulted. In either respect the result of the inquiry is one and the

* 2 Kings, xviii. 1—7.

same. The smiles of Heaven have crowned us with prosperity. The frowns of the Almighty have withered our success, blighted our prospects, and visited us with the storms of adversity. The hand of the Lord hath done this ; and the Holy One of Israel, he hath performed it. Such has invariably been the case in proportion as we have or have not, as a nation favoured with the oracles of Heaven, walked according to that revelation, and honoured or disgraced it by our individual behaviour, and national deportment. A wicked nation can no more stand before an offended God than a wretched sinner ; and both, left to the unrestrained course of his naked judgment, must perish for ever.

The consequences, therefore, of *hearkening* to, or *disobeying*, the voice of the Lord, both nationally and individually, are plain. The very nature of the case points them out to us ; and the word of the living God proclaims, ratifies, and confirms the whole. As “ the *soul* that sinneth, it shall die ;” so, the *nation* that sinneth, it shall perish. As “ he that believeth not” the gospel of our salvation “ shall be damned ;” so, “ the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” As

Moses speaketh,* “Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee,” &c.; so, as the same man of God affirmeth,† “It shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God.” The conclusion, therefore, derivable from both considerations, is obvious: “Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.”‡ But we hasten to notice—

* Deut. vii. 12—16.

† Deut. viii. 19, 20.

‡ Deut. vii. 9, 10.

III. Some *objections* which may be urged, perhaps, against the statements here put forth.

Excellent and binding as the truths of God are, both nationally and individually considered, there are not wanting those persons who are anxious to throw off their authority in either respect, through the medium of cavilling objections; and thus they clearly evince their inherent dislike of the divine word, and their deep-seated hostility to the divine will.

Objection 1.—It may be said, perhaps,—all this applies to *Israel of old*, as a peculiar nation, raised up in a particular manner, for a special purpose; and therefore the circumstances in which they were placed are no model for us; neither are we to expect similar interpositions; nor are we under the same obligations.

Answer.—Granted that Israel of old was a peculiar nation, &c., &c.; but is not he, who was their God, the God of all the families of the earth? Besides, were they the only people whom God designed to bless and protect; or were they the only people who are bound to honour and obey him; or who stand in need of his mercy; or who are within the sphere of his dominion, and the regulations of his empire? We plead not for the mere circumstantials of

their case, but for the moral responsibility of the accountable creature, whether collectively or individually considered. And as that responsibility is not lessened by our not being of their national extraction, nor dealt with in exactly the same miraculous and immediately divine-interposing manner; so is it vastly increased and extended by the clearer dispensation under which we are placed, and the larger and more bountiful discoveries of the divine will with which we are favoured.

Objection 2.—But does the *Old Testament* equally apply to us as the *New*; and are we to consider the ancient records of the divine will as certainly addressed to us, as they were to those to whom they were immediately spoken?

Answer.—Undoubtedly this is the case. True, its typical institutions are not to be regarded by us now as a sacrificial service to be devoutly performed; because we have their glorious substance in the person, promises, and salvation of Jesus Christ our Lord: but still they are to be profitably consulted in reference to the blessed object to which they point. And as for the civil injunctions, national distinctions, privileges, and duties, which it propounds, they are all to be substantially viewed through the medium of

the moral law, and the whole revealed will of God, in its wide application and extended detail; both with regard to a man's own soul, and the welfare and happiness of the community at large.

Objection 3.—But do we meet with *any intimation* of this kind in the New Testament, as setting forth the bounden duty of all who are favoured with the revealed will of God, to conform to its voice, nationally and individually, in all their ways and works?

Answer.—Certainly we do. What means our blessed Lord when he says, “Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* Surely this does not merely refer to his own vicarious obedience to the law for our justification from guilt and condemnation before God; but to the vindication and establishment of its authority over all nations and people in their moral accountability to him with whom they have to do. And in the very nature of things, how can it be otherwise?

* Matt. v. 17, 18.

The same word that speaks to one, speaks to all. The obligation that binds one, binds all. And if it be acknowledged in our individual capacity, can it lose its authority when individuals are congregated together in one vast community? Besides which, what says St. Paul on the subject? "Whatsoever things were written *aforetime*, were written for *our* learning," &c., &c.* And again, "Now all these things happened unto *them* for ensamples: and they are written for *our* admonition," &c.†

Objection 4.—But how is it possible, amidst a *mixed description* of character, to bring about such a state of things as that for which you plead?

Answer.—Try, and leave the issue with God. Admit the principle; enforce the obligation; and the result of the experiment, through the blessing of Heaven, will be as beneficial as it is reasonable in its nature and confidently to be expected. But if by a mixed state of society you mean, some who are *released* from these duties, and some who are *obliged* to perform them, we reply, you are quite mistaken on the subject; there is no such thing. No such case can pos-

* Rom. xv. 4.

† 1 Cor. x. 11.

sibly arise. All, as the creatures of God, accountable to him, are bound to obey his will ; and it is at the peril of their soul if any disregard its claims. Or if you mean by a mixed society some who acknowledge that authority and are disposed to obey it, and others who deny and invalidate its voice ; still we reply, as that authority is undoubtedly binding upon all, let those who are of a better mind endeavour to extend its influence, and labour for its general sway. The duty is clear, and none can neglect it with impunity. The event must be left with God.

Objection 5.—But would you have everything to be based upon the divine word, and regulated according to the divine will ?

Answer.—Yes, everything. We would have the whole nation, as well as the single individual, to act upon this principle—" Trust in the Lord with all thine heart ; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."* Anything short of this will not suffice ; and beyond this we are not warranted to proceed.

* Prov. iii. 5, 6.

Objection 6.—Do you, then, wish for men to throw aside the abilities and talents which God hath given them, and to take everything as a matter of mere necessity, or implicit faith, without a due exercise of wisdom and discrimination?

Answer.—By no means. We would have men to think, ponder, and deliberate, as the case may be, and as the occasion may require, with all the skill and capacity they are able to put forth; but still we would have everything done in the fear of God, and according to his laws; taking both for the guide and foundation of every proceeding. The highest honour to which any man or nation may attain is, to be instrumental, in the hands of God, of doing good in the advancement of his glory; and the creature's highest dignity is, not to act independently of his Maker, or in opposition to his authority, but in devoting to him all the influence, energies, and powers with which he is endued, in subserviency to his will, and in maintaining and promoting the integrity of his word, and the excellency of his name.

Objection 7.—But would you have our kings, princes, and rulers, to be always consulting the word of God, taking that word for their guide,

and constantly inquiring for a “thus saith the Lord?” Can this be required at their hand? Or would it be consistent with the dignity of their station, and the honour to which they are raised?

Answer.—Why not? Surely our safest course must be to follow the voice of heavenly wisdom in all our ways. Now this is the object of our plea. More than this need not be desired; and less than this ought not to satisfy any intelligent and responsible being. Consequently, with regard to all such elevated personages, however high their dignity or great their power, we would have them just what the word of God requires them to be—men fearing God, and *working* righteousness. We would wish to see them just what the Lord demands and points out in his word. “And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the

commandment, to the right hand or to the left ; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.”* And the easy access to the sacred volume with which we are favoured, renders the neglect of this duty doubly inexcusable.

Objection 8.—But would it not be better to leave men to think and *act for themselves* as they deem best, in respect of *God’s* will, and only bring them into order and subjection in a *civil*, and not in a *religious* sense ?

Answer.—Such a maxim as this may never be admitted by any man that fears God, and owns the authority of his word. Prevalent as such an opinion is, and fondly cherished as it may be, it is nothing more than an apology for impiety and licentiousness. A man may dishonour God as he likes, so that he does not violate the order of social life ! Horrible suggestion ! Dreadful thought ! Is all national energy to be expended upon *man* ; and is there no zeal to be manifested for the glory of *God* ? Why do men frame enactments for the prevention of theft, murder, slander, &c. ? Is it merely because such crimes are outrages upon the order

* Deut. xvii. 18—20.

of *society*? If so, it is not a sound, neither can it be said to be a Christian, legislation. Does not the law of God forbid these sins? And does not that same law, which forbids these, prohibit likewise the sin of idolatry, of blasphemy, of sabbath-breaking, &c.? Now, if the honour of the Sabbath-day, or the system of religious worship which a man should adopt for the soul's eternal welfare, may be left to the mere will and choice of the creature with impunity, why might not the same licence be granted in reference to men's character, property, or life? Can you separate the two classes of injunctions? Do they not stand side by side in the same divine code? Are they not both sanctioned by the authority of the same divine law? Then how may you throw the one to the winds, and afterwards pretend to reverence the other? Or if you strip the latter of its divine original, and reduce its observance to a mere civil standard, leaving the first part of the sacred statutes to the will of man as he likes; is not this virtually to proclaim the independence of the creature, and to throw aside all obligatory regard for the divine law whatsoever? And yet, strange and startling as the discovery may be, is not this the principle avowed, and this the

dangerous position—the *Scylla and Charybdis*—into which the vessel of the state is being conducted by the conspicuous statesmen of the day? And do not thousands, and tens of thousands, follow in their train, approve this vast impiety, and thus swell our national guilt and danger to an inconceivable amount? But let men pause in time. God knows how to avenge his own quarrel, and how to assert the dignity and honour of his own name!

Objection 9.—Why, then, according to this, you would wish to see the *whole nation living in the fear of God*, walking according to his word, and striving together to promote his glory!

Answer.—So far as such an object may be accomplished in the fulfilment of the divine purposes, most certainly we would. Nor is it possible to desire a greater happiness or a higher honour for our queen and country than this. “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*, and an *holy nation*.”* Oh! that such were our character! Then Israel’s blessing

* Ex. xix. 5, 6.

would be *ours*! Then of *us*, as of Israel of old, it might be said,—“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,” &c.*

* Num. vi. 24—27.

SERMON XII.

PRINCES AND RULERS, AS THE POSITIVE SERVANTS OF GOD, ARE BOUND TO PROMOTE THE INTERESTS OF HIS REVEALED WILL, AND THE HONOUR OF HIS NAME.

ISAIAH, XLIX. 23.

“ And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

WE have in these words a most striking illustration of the grand truth put forth by the apostle in the conclusion of that golden chain of argument contained in Rom. viii. 28—31: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who shall be against us?” There is, however, this difference to be noted. What the apostle asserts, applies to each one of the people of God in particular; God is for him, and therefore nothing can be against him;

whereas what the text proclaims is intended for the whole church of God at large—none of them shall ever be ashamed that wait upon the Lord.

The church is here foreseen and described in her low condition and abject abasement—a captive, oppressed, in exile, diminished, feeble, afflicted, brought low. The prophet anticipates and predicts her restoration, increase, and glory; and he calls upon heaven and earth to rejoice in the event.—“Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.”* It is evident that this predicted blessedness must comprehend a vast deal more than the restoration from the Babylonish captivity, although that event might have been one object immediately in view. The prophet speaks of the admission of the *Gentiles* into the church of God; and of the *multitudes* that should thereby be added to it of “such as shall be saved.” The Redeemer, who was to “raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel,”† was also to be given “for a light to the Gentiles, and to be my

* Ver. 13.

† Ver. 6.

salvation unto the end of the earth.”* Such was the voice of Jehovah the Father, in speaking of his covenant engagements with, and to, Jehovah the Son. In the execution of this purpose—“*Kings* shall see and arise, *princes* also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.”† Farther on in the chapter the prophet says,‡ “Behold, *these* shall come far; and, lo, *these* from the north and from the west; and *these* from the land of Sinim.” And then, opening still further this vision of mercy, in order to encourage the church in the expectation of this abundance of grace in the conversion of sinners to the faith of the promised Saviour, he says again,§ “Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: *all these* gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doth.”

If it be asked, in what *manner*, by what *means*, or through what *agency* or instrumentality, the Lord will bring all this to pass? the prophet informs us,—“Thus saith the Lord God,

* Ver. 6. † Ver. 7. ‡ Ver. 12. § Ver. 18.

Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people : and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And *kings* shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their *queens* thy nursing-mothers : they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”* The obvious meaning of which is, the Lord will so over-rule the hearts and ways of men, in the accomplishment of his gracious designs, as that, even where they themselves are not partakers of his mercy, he will dispose them to favour his cause ; and, whether with or against their consent, he will so work as to make them instrumental in the salvation of his church and the promotion of his glory. Nor shall this wonderful exertion of the divine wisdom and power be confined to the lower classes, or humbler grades, of life. But even *kings* shall be engaged in this work, and *queens*, or, as it is in the margin, *princesses*, shall lend their aid in the same cause, and become the “nourishers,” or the nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers of the church of God ; and

* Ver. 22, 23.

they shall deem it their highest honour to be so employed, and find it their greatest happiness to take a part in so great a work.

Now there are two things which must be evident from hence. First, whatever fulfilment these prophecies have hitherto *partially* received, there has nothing yet taken place in the annals of the church which may at all be considered as coming up to the *full* meaning of these significant expressions—not even the day of Pentecost itself; nor the glorious era of the Reformation, when the Spirit of God was so largely poured forth; nor even the wide spreading of the gospel at the present day through the means of missionary exertion, and the circulation of the divine word; and therefore the *grand* fulfilment still remains for the future, “when the mystery of God shall be filled up.”* Secondly, this being the case, the general tenour of the personal and practical obligation of these truths remains in *full force* upon all who ever have had, or ever may have, the opportunity or privilege of being possessed of, or becoming acquainted with, the revealed will of God, which alone makes them known to us.

This latter remark is of considerable import-

* Rev. x. 7.

ance in reference to the subject which is immediately before us. God never brings any of his accountable creatures, whether in providence or grace, into such a position as to engage them to promote his glory in the furtherance of their own good, or the welfare of others; but it is their bounden duty, and would be for their greatest happiness, to be so employed, whether he were pleased to make use of them or not. No one, we should imagine, may question or deny this statement. And if so, we are then brought to a most important conclusion as it respects ourselves—viz., that it is *our* duty, whether we are disposed to enter upon its discharge or not, and would be for *our* good, whether we are actually so engaged or not, to endeavour to advance the cause and glory of God, and promote the best welfare of our fellow creatures, especially with regard to the gospel of Christ and the salvation of the soul.

Of course the remark must extend to all who are placed under the force of this obligation; and therefore it will apply with a greater or less power, in proportion as men have, or have not, the opportunities or ability of engaging in such a work, and promoting such a cause. Whilst it is incumbent upon *all*, it will lie with a heavier

weight upon *some*. For instance, if the Lord have said, that "*kings* shall be the nursing-fathers, and their *queens* the nursing-mothers" of his church, in its extension and enlargement, it is the *duty* of such to be so employed; and it would be for their *happiness* and *honour* were they so engaged. Nor may they neglect this duty, or disregard this privilege, without incurring the most awful responsibility, and provoking God to mark them out as signally in the execution of his judgments, as they are elevated above others in dignity, rank, and station.

The subject, therefore, which we have to consider from these words, is,—

I. That princes, or rulers, as such, are the positive servants of God; and therefore bound to promote, above all things, the interests of his revealed word, and the honour of his name, in the welfare of his church and people.

II. That such a discharge, or disregard of this obligation, will always yield a sure test of their own state, and the character of their government; and where it prevails it will be visible, more or less, in all their ways and works.

May He who, in speaking of the Redeemer's glory and the extension of his kingdom, hath said, "All kings shall fall down before him: all

nations shall serve him,"* so influence the hearts of *our* princes and rulers, that they may esteem it their highest honour, and find it their greatest happiness, to be the humble, devout, and devoted servants of him who is emphatically styled, "King of kings, and Lord of lords!"†

Before, however, we enter upon this subject, a few remarks must be premised. In the general acceptation of the term princes, or rulers, we mean, not merely such as are invested with *despotic* authority, but more especially, in reference to ourselves, such as reign by virtue of a *mixed*, and therefore *milder* power; whether that power be considered as vested in their own hands, or distributed, from the royal throne, throughout all the various sections and gradations of the government into which the supreme authority is parcelled out, and by means of which it is exercised for the general good, upheld, and maintained. In all which, it is not the man that fills the subordinate office, whether high or low, simply considered, who rules or governs; but the occupant of the throne who appoints him to the office, endues him with the power, and who virtually, though not actually, rules and governs

* Ps. lxxii. 11.

† Rev. xix. 16.

in that official person invested with that official importance. And this applies to the whole system and order of government, from the lord chancellor or prime minister, down to the ordinary country magistrate or village tithing-man. Though their office be different, in respect of the degree of influence connected with it, yet their authority and power, be it more or less, come from the same source, and are bestowed by the same hand. Therefore, it is not merely the judge that rules, nor the magistrate, nor the other inferior officer, but the king, or the supreme authority, that rules and governs in and by both, according to the measure with which each is endued; whilst, at the same time, it must not be forgotten that in the office which is filled, and the duty which is exercised, every member of the government represents, as well as partakes of, the ruling power. The one as well as the other is the king's officer, acts in the king's name, and exercises the king's prerogative. It is manifest, therefore, that, independently of their own *personal* responsibility to God for all their ways and works, there is another, and even more binding claim, arising from their *official* capacity. What the source of

their power is bound to do, they are engaged to perform the same in the diffusion of its streams, according to their various degrees. And this obligation is as irresistible in its voice, as addressed to the minutest fraction of the active government, according to its measure, as before stated, as it is when directed immediately to the chief source of the supreme dominion itself; whilst the grand duty of promoting the divine honour and glory, which rests in full weight on the royal authority, must of necessity be great, in proportion to its dignity and power, as it is in any of its minor portions, through the medium of which it is subdivisionally put forth. If each fragment of power, according to its degree, be bound to promote the honour and cause of God, how much more the source from whence it emanates, and the centre in which the whole unites! Let this remark be fairly established, and full yunderstood, and the path before us will be open to the intelligence and discernment of all.

The doctrine, then, now immediately before us, is this,—

I: That princes, or rulers, as such, are the *positive servants of God*, and therefore bound

to promote, *above all things*, the interests of his revealed word, and the honour of his name, in the welfare of his church and people.

Now surely it must be a self-evident proposition, that all who are entrusted with the ruling authority are bound to promote the best interests of the people over whom they preside. But the question is, in what do the *best interests* of a nation or people consist? Till this be ascertained, it is plain we can come to no satisfactory or decisive conclusion on the subject. We ask, then, in what do the best interests of a nation or people consist? Do they consist in the extension of territory; the spread of conquest; the multiplicity of resources; the advancement of the arts and sciences; of wealth and honour; business and trade? We deny the assertion. We grant, indeed, that these are objects never to be lost sight of by those rulers who would aim to promote a nation's welfare, and that they can by no means be neglected without a gross violation of the trust with which they are invested; but we must by no means concede that these are the *chief* or the *only* things to be attended to in the prosecution of a nation's true happiness or prosperity. No; there are other and far greater

concerns than any of these, which demand the attention both of rulers and the people. Be the number of their subjects great or small, more or less—so many millions, or only so many tens or hundreds of thousands—they are all, from the least to the greatest, not excluding even the highest and royal personage enthroned, immortal and accountable beings; they are all endued with an invaluable soul; they are all sinners before God; they must all die; they all stand in need of mercy through the Saviour's mediation; they must all appear in judgment before God, to whom, primarily, they owe all their allegiance and the devotion of all their time, talents, and powers; and they will all, according as they have, or have not, sought that mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and lived to his glory, be either received for ever into heaven, or cast for ever into ruin, without any exception of persons whatsoever. Will any man, then, in his proper senses, venture to assert, that a mere earthly prosperity, whether nationally or individually considered, is *all*, or even the *chief* thing, that men have to attend to whilst they are here? Or will any one venture to affirm that this is *all*, or even the *chief* thing, which rulers and princes

are to keep in view in the exercise of that power which ought to be directed for the promotion of a nation's *best* interests, or the *best* welfare of the people? If men were not what they are, as specified above; if you could imagine such a thing as a nation or a world without souls; if there were no God, no eternity, no heaven, no hell; if human existence were confined to the narrow space of our present being; if there were no such thing as death, or if, when we die, we die like the beasts, and perish for ever—then, indeed, this might be the case. The voice of a nation, as well as of an individual, then might be, “Let us eat and drink,” buy and sell, live in pleasure and wax wanton—“for to-morrow we die.”* But since the case is not so; since men are what they are—the creatures of God, and accountable to him; since “it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment;”† since eternity is before us, in all its grand realities and momentous importance, in bliss or woe for evermore—it is blindness—it is folly—it is madness—it is even *atheism* itself, to live and act as if this world were our only portion; or to neglect the

* 1 Cor. xv. 32.

† Heb. ix. 27.

only opportunity, or disregard the only means, or abuse or misapply the power and influence which, in subserviency to the divine will, and in dependence on the divine blessing, might conduct us to the possession and enjoyment of another and far better. As our Lord therefore speaks of a *man*, so we of a *nation*, prince, or ruler. What is either he or they profited, if they gain the whole world, and lose their own soul? Or what shall a man, or any number of men, give in exchange for their soul? The *soul*, then, in all its vast, interesting, immortal, and eternal concerns, is the CHIEF BUSINESS OF MAN. It is *this* which, above all other things, he ought to regard. And as this obligation rests upon man everywhere, in his national as well as individual capacity; so is he bound, in every condition, and under every possible consideration, to attend to its welfare, as the supreme object of his anxieties, and consequently, in the same manner, to seek the divine mercy, and promote the divine glory. And hence, again, it clearly appears, that not only are we bound to attend to these things individually, each one for *himself*, but we ought to enforce the obligation upon *others*, according to our abilities and opportunities; and therefore the *more* ability,

opportunity, power, or influence, any man is possessed of, the *more* is he engaged to act in this manner; and this, of course, must tell with a tremendous ratio as we ascend the scale of society, and fix our regards upon the ruling authority and sovereign power itself.

But the truth and force of these remarks will receive additional confirmation if we steadily keep in view some other considerations which must by no means be omitted. The doctrine now before us resolves itself into a twofold statement,—viz.

1. That princes or rulers are the *positive servants of God*;

2. That, therefore, they are bound, *above all things*, to promote the interests of his revealed word, and the honour of his name, in the welfare of his church and people.

Now this will the more clearly appear, if we take into account *the origin of the kingly power*.

This is a main consideration in the prosecution of our inquiry. From whence, then, we ask, does the kingly office, or ruling authority, proceed? Does it proceed from *man*? Does it proceed from the *people*? We reply, No. It

proceeds from GOD. It is of divine origin, appointment, order, and authority. "*By me*," is the voice of eternal wisdom, "kings reign and princes decree justice."* "*By the grace of God*," according to our own national motto, is such an one king, defender of the faith, &c. Nor can a greater insult be offered to the Majesty of heaven, in this respect, nor a more direct invasion attempted or made on the divine prerogative, than to wrest the appointment from the hands of God, and place it in the fanciful predilections of his fickle and guilty creatures. A man that holds his crown at the option of the people, or receives it solely at their hands, patronizes rebellion against the divine government; and it is no wonder if, as a just punishment for his presuming audacity, God leave him to be the mere puppet of the common will, tossed to and fro according to the capricious bursts of the popular indignation or applause, whether right or wrong, with which he will be constantly assailed. A ruler or prince of this description, instead of casting his crown at the Redeemer's feet, and seeking aid and blessing

* Prov. viii. 15.

from above, will be obliged to cringe to the multitude whom he cannot govern, or to usurp a power which they never conceded to him. "The pressure from without"—the extorted confession, the fretful and peevish acknowledgment of one who, recently filling the office of the first servant of the crown in this land, was vexed and grieved to find, that the popular will, to which he had pandered for the accomplishment of a purpose, was too impetuous to be restrained when he wished to keep it within definite bounds, giving it full scope till it reached a certain point, and then anxious that it should proceed no further—will be too great for his paralysed arm to resist. He will find, to his daily cost, that there is no fixed principle which can bind him and the people together; that suspicion and distrust, or tyranny and discontent, are the mutual portion of each. The grand secret of the whole is,—the entire framework of such a government or kingdom is out of order, from first to last. Not based upon the truth, it receives not the sanction, neither can it be blessed with the approbation, of Heaven. Destitute of that authority, it is stripped of that bond of union by which both the prince and

people ought to be mutually held together in the fear of God. The testimony of the inspired apostle is decisive on this subject. When exhorting the Christians at Rome to be "subject unto the higher powers," he adds, "For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."* So when Moses admonished Israel on this subject, foretelling how they would wish to act when they were come into their inheritance, he says,† "Thou shalt in any wise set him to be king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose," &c. And when, in the days of Samuel,‡ this wish was expressed, and this gift was vouchsafed, *who* chose Saul to be their king? *Who* selected him for that office, and endued him with that power? It was the Lord. And again, when Saul disobeyed the voice of the Lord, and another was to be appointed in his room, *who* chose David as his successor, and called him to the kingdom? It was the Lord.§ Now, then, if princes and rulers receive

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

† Deut. xvii. 14, 15.

‡ 1 Sam. ix. x.

§ 1 Sam. xvi. 1—13.

their authority in its proper origin from God, and are therefore answerable to him for its use or abuse, are they not, on that very account, bound to exercise their power in the promotion of his honour and glory, as the first and chief thing they have to attend in seeking to advance the nation's welfare and happiness? And this, by the way, shews the real nature and aggravated guilt of the crime of *rebellion*, whether committed by the prince or ruler immediately against God, by departing from his precepts, or acting in opposition to his word; or whether committed by the people immediately against their prince or ruler, acting in conformity to God's revealed will.* It is not so much because it is an offence committed by, or against, an earthly prince, as it is a sin, mediately or immediately, perpetrated against God. It is God's honour and authority that are insulted; and therefore the crime is great in proportion to the majesty and greatness of him against whom it is manifested. This it was that led Samuel to affirm,† “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry,” &c.; and

* See 1 Sam. xv. 1—23, and 2 Chron. xxx. 1—10.

† 1 Sam. xv. 23.

this it was that led the wise man to say,† “Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.”

* Eccl. x. 20.

SERMON XIII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

ISAIAH, XLIX. 23.

“ And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

SUCH is the character of the best interests of man, and such is the origin of the kingly power. Man is born for eternity. All his ways and works should be chiefly directed to the acquisition of that happiness which will last for ever. Man, moreover, is a restless being. Order and discipline are as requisite for his present welfare, as grace and mercy are for his future salvation. God is not the author of confusion. To the divine will all must submit; the divine word all ought to obey. This we have already seen in our previous remarks; this we may still

discover in our future observations. Passing on from the origin of the ruling authority, we shall endeavour to strengthen the point before us by further elucidations. Observe, then,

Again, in order to form a just estimate of this subject, we must not omit to notice *the manner in which the Lord speaks of princes and rulers in his word.*

If we examine with care and attention the divine records, we shall find that they are always spoken of in reference to their accountability to Him, and as bound to the execution of his will, and the promotion of his glory. They are expressly said to be *God's servants*; that is, he calls them; ordains them; appoints them to their work; and holds them responsible for the manner in which they execute it, whether with an eye to his glory, or merely for the purposes of their own pleasure and aggrandizement. A prince or ruler is never to be considered as being independent of a power superior to his own; but as always subject to the King of kings, as his own people are, under God, to him. Nor does this apply only to such as *acknowledge* the divine authority, and rule in submission to the divine will; as in the case of David, who is expressly said to have been the Lord's servant,

and, as such, diligently and faithfully ruled in his fear, and aimed to promote his glory.* But even they who are not favoured with such privileges, or not possessed of such a clear revelation, are held under the same obligation, and are answerable to him who is "Most High over all the earth," for the use or abuse of the power with which they are invested, and for the manner in which they have, or have not, acted from higher motives than any which concern their own interests or welfare. How striking is that appeal in Isaiah, xli. 1—4! How clearly does it exhibit the supreme dominion of God even over the highest authority of man! "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? &c. &c. I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he!" Even Nebuchadnezzar, the proud prince of Babylon, again and again is said to have been the *Lord's servant*,† although he cast off his authority, and haughtily magnified himself against him; and although the general tenour of his commission was to scourge the guilty nations of the earth at large, and more espe-

* Psalm lxxxix. 20, and lxxviii. 70—72.

† Jer. xxv. 9, and xliii. 10.

cially God's offending church and people! How gloriously did the Most High determine to pull down the arrogance of that proud worm when his work was done! "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is *this* the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ——?"* And as of the oppressor, so also is it declared of the RESTORER of God's captive people. Cyrus is expressly said to have been the Lord's *shepherd*, even though he did not know him, for the overthrow of Babylon, and the release of his people;† and it is affirmed that God appointed him to this work for the making known of his glory. And who does not see that hardened Pharaoh was bound to obey the voice of the Lord, when commanded to let the people go; and that his final doom was as signalized by the retributive

* Isaiah, xiv. 13—20.

† Isaiah, xlv. 24—28, and xlv. 1—6.

justice of Heaven, as his pride and obstinacy had been manifested against the Most High? Oh! let the haughty and imperious princes and rulers of the earth remember that there is One above them—One that can humble their pride, and lay them low—One that can say, and carry the word into full effect, by the execution of the most tremendous vengeance,—“For I will at this time send all my plagues upon *thee*, &c. ; and I will stretch out my hand upon *thee*, and smite *thee*, &c. &c. And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power ; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth !”* Now, then, since the divine word thus tells us that princes and rulers are the *servants of God*, are they not bound to execute his will, and promote his glory? And if this be the case, even where they have but few opportunities of learning his will, how much more must the obligation be increased when there is every advantage for the acquisition of that knowledge, and where that privilege itself is possessed in all its fulness, blessing, and grace?

* Exod. ix. 13—16.

It may be useful here to adduce, *what is the estimate of our own church on this subject.*

The church speaks as a faithful witness for the truth of God ; and exhibits the claims of that truth in their most striking and lucid colours. Whatever the condition of others might be supposed to be, the case is plain in reference to ourselves. One should think that it must be impossible for any person carefully to examine the tenour of our stated services, and not perceive that they are all, more or less, founded upon the principles for which we plead, and that they exhibit the obligations which we are anxious to enforce. No individual Christian may be indifferent to the welfare of "the powers that be," without a manifest violation of his bounden duty. He must not only *obey* them, but he must *pray* for them. The same duty, of course, which is incumbent upon one, would equally apply to ten thousand Christians ; and if a nation profess the Christian faith, the same becomes as much a nation's duty and privilege as in any other case whatsoever. The apostle's words are express. He says,* " I

* 1 Tim. ii. 1—6.

exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made *for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority*; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;" &c. &c. Now how does our church act in reference to this injunction? Let us follow the apostle's order. In the Litany, we are taught to pray, that the Lord may be pleased "to illuminate *all bishops, priests, and deacons*, with true knowledge and understanding of his word; and that both by their preaching and living they may set it forth and shew it accordingly." We are then taught to pray, that it may please the Lord "to endue the *lords of the council, and all the nobility*, with grace, wisdom, and understanding." We then pray, that it may please the Lord "to bless and keep *the magistrates*, giving them grace to execute justice, and to maintain truth." We then pray, that it may please the Lord "to bless and keep *all his people*." So far the provisions of our church are excellent and scriptural; they are benevolent, kind, and spiritual. But does she stop here? What does she say about our *kings, princes, and rulers*? How are we taught to

pray for them? Observe the language employed: "That it may please thee to keep and strengthen in the true worshipping of thee, in righteousness, and holiness of life, thy servant Victoria, our most gracious queen and governor"—"to rule her heart in thy faith, fear, and love, and that she may evermore have affiance in thee, and ever seek thy honour and glory." You say, perhaps, this does not reach the elevation of the preceding remarks; this only places the honour and glory of God upon an equality with other duties which are also to be faithfully discharged, and therefore does not meet the argument so anxiously enforced. Turn, then, to the particular prayers of the church; what is the voice of them? Take that first which is for "the queen's majesty." Observe its spirit: "O Lord, our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth. Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious sovereign lady, Queen Victoria, and so replenish her with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that she may always incline to thy *will*, and walk in thy *way*," &c. &c. This shews that the will of God should be the basis of her autho-

rity, and that in every respect she should live, govern, and walk in the Lord's ways. And this we have urged in a former discourse. But go a little further, examine the two prayers which come immediately after the repetition of the moral law which contains the sum and substance of the practical obligation of conforming to the whole revealed will of God, which we particularly enforce; and what do we there find? In the one it is said—"that she (knowing whose minister she is) may, *above all things*, seek thy honour and glory;" and in the other—"that in all her thoughts, words, and works, she may ever seek thy honour and glory;" and THEN, not as the first, but only as a secondary object, "study to preserve thy people committed to her charge in wealth, peace, and godliness," &c. &c. This gives a full expression of all we can wish to advance on this subject. The proposition is, that it is the positive duty, and bounden obligation, of princes and rulers, as the servants of God, to promote, *above all things*, the interests of his revealed word, and the honour of his name, in the welfare of his church and people. This we have proved from the first law of all good government, from the source of the kingly

authority ; from the tenour of the word of God ; and, lastly, from the liturgical, and other prayers of our church, expressly appointed for the direction and measure of our supplications in this respect. These considerations illustrate and confirm the great doctrine before us—that, above all other things, it is the bounden duty of princes and rulers to live and govern in this manner. And it is only in this way the words of our text can be really and truly fulfilled ; excepting as the Lord may so overrule the hearts and ways of some, as to make them, whether they wish it or not, subserve the interests of his kingdom, and promote his cause and glory. In the former sense, and not in the latter, may all those especially who are called “ Christian kings, princes, and governors,” become the nursing-fathers, and nursing-mothers of the church of the living God ; and deem it their highest honour, and find it their greatest happiness, to be so engaged, by aiding and advancing so glorious and sacred a cause !

But if this be the case, will it not necessarily follow—

II. That such a discharge or disregard of this obligation will always yield a sure test of their

own state and the character of their government, and that where it prevails it will be visible, more or less, in all their ways and works?

We are to judge of the character and condition of princes and rulers, as such, as we do of private individuals and professing Christians, as such, and of the character of their government as we do of the general tenour of a man's life. According to their respective stations, the same truth equally applies to either. The only difference is, the one stands upon a narrower, the other upon a broader scale; but the same law properly determines both. God alone "knoweth the hearts of all men." We judge of men by their actions. This is the rule laid down by our blessed Lord when speaking of such characters:—"By their fruits ye shall know them."* "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." This belongs as much to a prince on the throne as to a poor man in his cottage. And must it not be clear, according to this comparison, that as an "*evil tree*" will, of itself, bring forth "*evil fruit*," so, of course, "*a good tree*" will

* Matt. vii. 15—20.

bring forth "*good fruit*?" Can men "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Wherever a man lives in the fear of God, and aims to promote his glory, will it not be visible? Can such a person, or such a course, be hid? Or, if it be concealed for a time, must it not, sooner or later, be brought to light? And if this be the case in the humble walks of life, will it not also be equally so in the elevated and exalted?—and the more in proportion to the rank which is held and the dignity which is possessed? Look over the wide surface of nature; while every part is visible to the eye, in proportion to the facilities we possess for examining its order and beauty, do not some portions more immediately arrest our notice? Is not the sturdy oak more conspicuous than the lowly shrub? and the waving forest than the falling twig or withered leaf? Equally striking is the contrast between some and others, according to the station they fill, and the character they evince. Whether men be righteous or wicked; whether princes aim at the discharge of this obligation, or altogether disregard its claims; they cannot be hid. God sees them, and men will notice them; and the more exalted their rank or sta-

tion may be, the more evident, and baneful or salutary, will be the settled impiety, or the practical godliness, in which they live.

But how will a prevailing, conscientious regard to the imperious claims of this obligation be manifested in the ways and works of rulers and princes?—and how is the character of their government to be discerned in this respect? The specification of a few particulars may be useful to all.

1. Where this is the case there will be *deep humiliation before God*, coupled with *free and ingenuous confessions both of individual and national guilt*.

No man can ever heartily desire or attempt to promote the glory of God without perceiving how grievously he hath sinned against him; how culpably he has hitherto neglected his bounden obligation; and how unworthy he is, either of the mercy which is requisite for his salvation, or of the honourable service to which he is called. This discovery and conviction will, of course, lay him low before God; cause him to acknowledge his own guilt and the sins of others; and lead him with the greatest earnestness to cry for the mercy of Heaven to be vouchsafed unto himself, as well as extended to the objects of

his care. And this will be the more manifested according to the dignity of the person who is so affected. Where such a feeling as this is wanting in prince or ruler, or in a private individual, there is that deficiency of proper conviction in both, which, if possessed, would as certainly induce the former to seek the promotion of the glory of God in his regal capacity, as it would lead the latter, in his humbler sphere, to desire an interest in the salvation of Christ, and to walk as becometh those who have found forgiveness of all their sins. When David was commended by the Lord for his thoughtful anxiety about his worship and service, with what feelings did he acknowledge the divine condescension and goodness? "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto!" &c., &c.* The deepest humility, together with conscious unworthiness, possessed his soul. This is just as it should be, and as it always will be, when a man really, in deed and in truth, comes to engage himself in the cause of God. For "who is he that will strike hands with me?" And "who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord."†

* 2 Sam. vii. 1—29. † Job, xvii. 3; Jer. xxx. 21.

The brightest crown will be cast at his feet, and the highest majesty will be brought low before him. When, again, Daniel sought the welfare of his people, and Ezra would reclaim them from their sins and fix them in the worship and service of God, how deeply were they affected with the nation's guilt, and how earnestly did they confess their iniquities and cry for mercy! "O my God," says Ezra, "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens!" &c., &c.* "O Lord," says Daniel, "the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and the mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name unto our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land!" &c.† Is there a nation upon earth, favoured, like Israel of old, with the oracles of God, but hath as often and grievously

* ix. 5—7.

† ix. 4—6.

done the same? Does not our own guilty land stand conspicuous, amidst all the kingdoms of the earth, in this respect, both in national privileges and national demoralization and guilt? Have not our own princes and rulers imitated the ingratitude and rebellion of Israel's leaders, and burst the bonds of God's authority, and cast off the yoke of his obedience? Have not the people, too, of all grades of the community, "made their faces harder than a rock, and (like them of old) refused to return?"* Would not our national guilt, also, mount up to the very heavens, if its total could be calculated; and does it not cry aloud in the ears of God for judgment and fiery indignation? Then do not such a feeling, and such a confession, become each one of us in particular, as having had a share in the accumulation of our national sins, and incurring the deserved judgments denounced against us? Can any person be properly affected by his violated responsibilities, and the awful circumstances of his condition, unless this be the case? More especially, does not such a frame of mind become those among us who have stood foremost in this unholy career, and have

* Jer. v. 3.

held a chief hand in forgetting, transgressing against, and departing from, the Lord? Can they be really aware of their sin and danger, and not be possessed of it? And will not the feeling deepen and increase a thousandfold when they see the necessity of attending, and begin seriously to apply themselves, in good earnest, to the discharge of the bounden duties and vast responsibilities which they have hitherto neglected; and which they now evidently discover can be no longer disregarded without incurring a tenfold degree of guilt, and a ten-times heavier condemnation? Doubtless it will be so; and where this feeling does not exist, and the truth must be told, neither prince, ruler, nor people, are possessed of the very first disposition for an acceptable reverencing of God; or, whatever regard either the one or the other may profess to pay for the advancement of his glory, it assumes the aspect of an awful insincerity, or wears the forbidding appearance of a pompous formality, or a hollow and empty hypocrisy. Nothing may dispense with such a feeling as this. The man that would serve God, and promote his glory, must first see his own nothingness; feel his own sinfulness; confess his own un-

worthiness ; and cry, from his inmost soul, " Lord, help me," as well as " Lord, save me, I perish."

2. Where there is such an anxiety to promote the interests of God's revealed will, and the honour of his name, there will also be a desire *to seek the guidance, and acknowledge the hand, of God in everything.*

Whoever aims to serve God aright will never set about such a work in his own wisdom or strength. Whether he be rich or poor, a prince or a beggar, his first step will be to seek help from above ; and his first grateful return for every mercy received, and for every degree of success vouchsafed, will be to " give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." Indeed, in the very nature of things, how can it be otherwise ? Before we may do the will of God, we must know what that will is. And where are we to gain that information ? Not from the maxims of the world. Not from the schools of the learned. Not from the artful subtleties and cavilling disputes of infidels and atheists. But from the pure source of God's revealed truth—from the scriptures—from the bible. Those scriptures, then, we must search. That word we

must study. Those divine oracles we must "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." And thus, through the teaching of God's holy Spirit, for which we must pray, and through the truth and direction of God's blessed word, which will be a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths, we shall not only be made wise unto salvation; but we shall know how to order our steps aright; how to walk before God in the land of the living; and how to promote his glory and serve our generation. What a blessing is here! As this affords the greatest happiness, so does it yield the highest honour, to which any mortal being, even the mightiest princes of the earth, may possibly attain! Could you enter the royal closet, where such a spirit prevails, you would behold the princely robe and glittering diadem thrown aside; and see the royal personage himself, as a poor, humble sinner, prostrate before the throne of Heaven, and earnestly crying for wisdom to direct him, as well as for mercy to pardon his sins, and the sins of his people! What a pattern for all princes and rulers is the prayer of Solomon! * When the Lord appeared

* 1 Kings, iii. 5—15.

to him, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee?" he answered, "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing," &c. In like manner, a prince or ruler of this description will acknowledge the hand of God in everything in which the welfare, correction, or peace of his people is concerned. Such a man as this will not vaunt his might, or policy, or power; nor will he assume the honour or success of any of his undertakings to himself; nor ascribe it to the valour of his armies, or to the courage of his people. If the nation prosper, be crowned with success, live in harmony and peace; if its influence spread abroad, and its power be acknowledged far and near; "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes," will be the grateful acknowledgment. Or, if it be visited with humiliating reverses; become weakened and impoverished; disappointed in its enterprizes, and humbled before its enemies; "Lord, we have sinned against thee," will be the humble confession; and "Lord, pardon our iniquities," will be the ear-

nest cry. Oh ! that such a spirit prevailed among our princes and rulers ! Oh ! that there were such an heart in them that they would thus fear the Lord continually ! .

SERMON XIV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONCLUDED.

ISAIAH, XLIX. 23.

“ And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

As “ out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” so, according as that which is uttered is really seen and felt within, will be the sincerity and fervour which mark the words that are spoken, and the deeds which ensue, as their native fruit. Sincerity is the chief ornament of character. A man who is not sincere, whether high or low, or rich or poor, offers himself to our notice under an aspect whose moral culpability is not easily described, either in the sensation created in our own bosom or in the just estimation of its own inherent desert. The

steady rule of the divine word is—"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men," &c. &c. Without this, God's service is nothing to us; it can afford no pleasure, nor yield any profit. Nor does this concern only the ignoble and mean. The prince or the ruler must as "heartily" serve God as any of his subjects; or else the throne will totter under his weight, and the crown which dazzles beholders will prove the heaviest burden to sink him into ruin. Have we seen the truth of this remark in our preceding discussions?—in the deep humiliation, the ingenuous confessions, and the earnest prayers, already noticed? Let us pursue the subject; and it is confidently hoped, that our discoveries may not be either without additional interest or profit. Besides what has been already advanced, we observe again,

3. Where there is such a desire to promote the interests of God's will and glory, there will also be *a fixed determination to banish all wicked men from their presence, and exclude them from their councils.*

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned? Impossible. One of their

first efforts will be to “set their house in order;”* not, as it has been often tauntingly proclaimed by wicked men, in eager anticipation of their downfall; but for the strength of their kingdom, and consolidation of their dominion. “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?”† No! it totters; it must fall; for the hand of the Almighty is uplifted against it. Princes that fear God must know this; and every one that would do good to others must begin at home with himself. How excellent was the determination of royal David! “I will

* With these words, my Lord —, in the hey-day of popular applause, dared to insult and taunt the whole bench of bishops, in a pointed and sarcastic address in the face of the nation, in his place in the House of Lords! How signally and speedily did the Almighty vindicate the affront thus cast upon his servants! From the very moment those words were uttered, the political doom of the haughty noble was irretrievably sealed. In the short space of a few fleeting years, like a dead man (though still living) he has long since been forgotten and out of mind. You may pass from one end of the land to the other, and not hear the name of —, the once darling idol and pet of the multitude, even mentioned, except perhaps now and then in the stifled utterance of a deep-rooted aversion or contempt! Oh! let not the lesson be forgotten by others! “Them that honour me,” saith God, “I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”—(1 Sam. ii. 30.)

† Psalm xciv. 20.

walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off; him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell in my house. He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." &c.* All that fear God, and would aim to promote his glory, must come to the same determination, if they would prosper under his blessing. It is reported of his late majesty, George III., of happy memory, when advised by evil men to the adoption of pernicious measures, that he expressed himself to this effect:—that "He knew how to put aside his crown, and how to lay down his life; but he would not violate an oath taken in the presence of God: and that, sooner than submit to the dictation of such councillors, he would rather go into the streets of London,

* Psalm ci.

and take the first twelve men of common sense he might meet with, and safely entrust the question to their decision; although he could not confide in his own servants." What a cutting reproof to all evil advisers!—what a noble instance of royal integrity and uprightness! Happy would it have been for this country, and for the welfare of this nation, if his *successors* had evinced the same holy principle, and the same conscientious regard in the fear of the Lord! Here, then, is a fine pattern for royal imitation and pursuit. Let the court be purified from all uncleanness. Let cringing sycophants and artful flatterers find no admission there. Let selfish, designing men be banished from the royal closet; and let none approach or counsel the highest national servant of God but such as truly serve the Lord themselves, and will cordially concur in promoting the honour and glory of his name. No hesitation, for a single moment, ought to be admitted here. The path of duty, according to God's word, is as plain for a prince as for an humbler individual. A vacillating indecision, or contemptuous disregard, manifested in this respect, renders the mightiest monarch contemptible in the eyes of all beholders. Good men will mourn over and

distrust him; wicked men will rejoice and secretly despise him. To do the will of God, he must "set his face like a flint," and determine to "know no man after the flesh," but as he follows the will, and walks in the fear, of the Lord. Such a prince as this God will uphold and bless. He will "give him his heart's desire, and not withhold the request of his lips."* He will "make him most blessed for ever, and exceeding glad with the light of his countenance." If asked why? the answer is, "For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved." Again,

4. Where there is such a desire for the promotion of the divine glory, there will be an anxiety to *fill all the offices of the church and state with men that fear the Lord, love the truth, and who will labour with heart and hand in the same cause for the advancement of true godliness.*

When a man is brought under the influence of principles answerable to the description here set forth, the question will be, not merely what may I do immediately by mine *own hand*, but what am I able to accomplish through the

* See Psalm xx. and xxi.

agency of *others*? Considering how widely the ruling authority extends, and through what a multiplicity of ducts and variety of channels it flows, from the throne itself to the utmost bounds of his dominions, it will become a question of paramount importance — by what means may all these divisions and subdivisions of the government be rendered available for the direct purpose of carrying into effect the claims of those vast obligations respecting the truth and honour of God and the welfare of men's immortal souls, in comparison of which all other subjects sink down into an absolute insignificance. To a mind thus exercised, it will be no difficult thing to perceive, not only that all these facilities *may*, but *must*, be made use of for this end; and the question will naturally arise, whether God may not have so ordered and appointed the constitution of things in this manner for the *very purpose* of shewing forth his glory; and, if so, whether as a prince or ruler, he may not be encouraged thereby to *employ* them for that object; nay, whether he be not *bound* by duty and allegiance to God so to do; and whether he be not *answerable* to him for the proper use or neglect of so powerful an engine entrusted to his care. Nor can we hesitate for

a moment in the conclusion to which we are led, in fixing the determination which a mind thus affected will sooner or later form. It cannot admit of the least shadow of a doubt, but that, so far at least as human energy and perseverance, through the divine blessing, may accomplish the work, the resolution will be to make the whole subserve the interests of the divine glory. For all the civil offices of the state, not merely will men of talent and industry be selected, but men that fear the Lord. If "he who ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God," they that bear office and authority under him must be men of the same stamp, men of the same principles, men actuated by the same motives, and men aiming at the same object. More especially in reference to the *church*, since that is always to be considered as the fountain-spring from whence the streams of divine knowledge must more particularly flow, and diffuse their influence throughout the land; the chief attention will be paid to her welfare. Interest, influence, patronage, the weight of authority, and the power of example, will all be thrown into that scale. Great circumspection and care will be manifested in the selection of pious and godly men to fill the office

of the sacred hierarchy ; and equal honesty and zeal will be displayed in the distribution of all the minor ecclesiastical patronage vested in the crown, and in the appointment of ministers to the vacant incumbencies as they successively occur. Favouritism will be discarded. The wishes of an abandoned courtier or time-serving place-hunter will be unheeded. Fawning flatterers and self-seeking expectants will be frowned into banishment and flight. The question will be, not whom shall I serve?—whom shall I gratify?—what party or friend shall I please?—but *how may I so dispose of this talent* as to further the object I have in view, and advance the honour of the God of heaven and earth? And even when a proper selection has been made, and the preferment or office disposed of, the matter will not be suffered to fall asleep as if there were nothing more to be thought, and nothing more to be done; but then, by a fatherly admonition, and private or open counsel, or rebuke, as the case may require, there will be an anxiety manifested to stir up the minds of those who have been raised to such responsible situations by way of remembrance, and exhort others who are entrusted with the talent of similar preferment to a

faithful disposal of the trust in the fear of God. How excellent and becoming was the conduct of good Hezekiah! "When he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together"—and exhorted them to "sanctify yourselves, and to sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers; for our fathers have trespassed and done that which was evil in the sight of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs"—how did he address them? In what manner did he enforce upon them the great duties to which they were called? "My sons," said he, "be not now negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him."* Oh! that Christian kings and princes, and all others who have any degree of influence to exercise in the church or state, were possessed of the same concern for the glory of God, and aimed in the same manner to diffuse its benefits, through the medium of their authority, counsel, and example, among all orders of their realm! Should these remarks ever be destined, in the providence of God, to meet the eye of such exalted and re-

* 2 Chron. xxix. 1—11.

sponsible personages, we would say, in the name of the Lord, "Go, and do thou likewise."

These are some of the fruits of such a conscientious regard for the claims of the obligation now enforced, which will invariably be produced by such princes and rulers as consider themselves the positive servants of God, and as such, bound above all things to promote the interests of his revealed word, and the honour of his name, in the welfare of his church and people. Many more particulars might be instanced; but these, for the present, will suffice to shew the amazing power of such a principle when called into action; and the unlimited extent to which it will reach. It will lay the mightiest monarch, as well as the humblest peasant, low before God, confessing his own sins, mourning over the nation's transgressions, and earnestly crying for mercy and forgiveness for both. It will lead him to seek the help, and acknowledge the hand, of God, in everything. It will produce a fixed determination to banish all wicked men from his presence, and exclude them from his councils. It will engender a lively anxiety to fill all offices, both in church and state, with men that fear the Lord, love the truth, and who will labour hand and heart in the

same cause for the advancement of true godliness.

And where such a spirit as this prevails, must it not be visible, more or less, in all their ways and works? and will it not stamp the character of the individual or government with unerring certainty? May such a disposition as this be smothered? Can such a character be hid, or remain unknown? Impossible. As well might you affirm that a conspicuous object cannot be seen, or that fire cannot burn, as that such a person, whoever he may be, may wrap his talent in a napkin, or put his candle under a bushel. The more elevated the station filled, the more conspicuous will be the light diffused. Some may be ready to affirm, that a man may be under the influence of this principle, and not make much show of it; that he may be doing much good in a private way, not wishing to put himself forward in these things, so as to attract the notice of others. Well, be it so. But can it always remain so, if the principle be real; or ought it to be so, while so much is to be done, and so few are disposed to co-operate in its execution? But let us survey the objection with a little more attention. Take the case of a poor man, who loves the Saviour, lives in the fear of

God, and aims to promote his glory. Can he be hid? Will he not be known, as such, in his parish and vicinity? Take the case of a parent, or family, living in the same manner. Can either he or they be hid? Will there not be a vast difference between such a parent, or such a family, and others around? Advance a step further. Take the case of a diligent, faithful pastor, labouring for the good of souls; preaching the word in season and out of season; spending and being spent in the cause of Christ, the promotion of his glory, and the truth of his gospel. Can such a man be hid? Will there not be a vast difference between such a servant of God and the many hireling shepherds of the day? We grant such ought to be the case with every one bearing that sacred office; but *sic non est in omnibus!* Ascend still higher. Take the case of the great and noble in the earth; select any of those who live in splendor and magnificence, surrounded with all that affluence and honour can bestow. Suppose such an one to be touched with this sacred flame, and aiming at this holy object. Can he be hid? Will he stand a mere cypher in his own station or dwelling, and not endeavour to enforce the great truths which lie so near his heart? Will such

a man as this permit his household, as is too often the case, to live in mere idleness and excess—a scandal to the master and a blot to the neighbourhood—while thousands of poor souls; on every side around, are living in ignorance, pining in want, and groaning under the burden and heat of the day? Will he not labour to enforce the fear of God, and a due attention to his word and will? Will such a man as this assign a more bountiful portion (with sorrow be it spoken, but let it be heard), as is often the case, to his own menials, than to the servants of the living God?—or will he shut up the bowels of his compassion against the indigence and misery, both of the bodies and souls, of his fellow-beings? What, then, will be the case when the impulse of this obligation is felt in the royal bosom, and dwells in the presence-chamber of the royal mind? May it be hid there? Can it lie dormant there? Active and energetic in every other instance that is brought

* How many a butler or upper servant in a gentleman's or nobleman's household, who merely brushes his master's coat, uncorks his bottles, or orders his table, has in various instances perhaps more than twice the amount of income which falls to the lot of many a poor vicar or curate, whose office is to care for souls, and tell men the way to happiness and glory!

under its sway, does it become all at once a lifeless notion when it ascends the highest scale, and brings those who are most likely to promote its spread under its mighty dominion? Away with such an idle thought! Wherever it erects its throne, it carries this omnipotent voice—"Where much is given, much is required;" and this, by the grace of God, will lead to the frame of mind, the action, and pursuit, already specified. Nor can aught but the execution of its plans, and the realization of its hopes—so far, at least, as it may please God to grant his blessing—satisfy such a mind, or yield the sweet fruits of tranquillity and comfort to such a bosom. In comparison of the attainment of this object, the glittering crown is but a splendid bauble; and the mightiest kingdom a mere toy, more likely to gratify a childish mind than the enlarged capacities of a soul that is born and taught of God. And what will be the estimate formed in that solemn coming hour, when death will level all distinctions (except that of having served God or not), and lay kings and princes, together with the humble and mean, in one common dust? Then, oh then, to be able to say, with good Hezekiah, in its near, apprehended approach, "Remember now, O Lord, I

beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,"* will afford far more peace and satisfaction than the review of any other exploits whatsoever! Such a man as this, if, like him, his soul have been delivered from the pit of corruption, and all his sins, through the Redeemer's blood and merits, cast out of God's sight,"† may go down to his grave in peace. Nor will he be soon forgotten when removed from the scene of his earthly labours. He will live in the grateful recollections of future generations, as one that "had done good in Israel both toward God, and toward his house,"‡ inscribed on the hearts of an affectionate people, as the most honourable and lasting memorial that may be erected to commemorate departed excellency and worth.

If the foregoing statements are based on the authority of Divine truth, the following deductions will ensue as some of their most obvious results :—

1. *How evident is it, that it is not an easy*

* Isaiah, xxxviii. 3.

† Ver. 17.

‡ 2 Chron. xxiv. 16.

office to be exalted to a throne, or entrusted with the affairs of a kingdom !

As the apostle speaks of the pastoral, so truly might we affirm of the regal, or ruling, office. " If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work ;" so, if any man desire the office of a king, prince, or ruler, he desireth a great work. It is often said that princes do not always rest on beds of down ; and that the glittering crown, which dazzles the eyes of others, is not to them free from thorns. How true ! Corroding care creeps into the regal palace, and haggard anxiety entwines itself around the royal throne ! But wherein consists the great work of the reigning prince ? Not merely in devising means for the nation's temporal welfare ; but, above all, in acting upon the claims of this great obligation, and in promoting and enforcing the honour of God, and the glory of his name. This is the first, the chief, the grand concern of princes and rulers ; and he that neglects this duty neglects the first homage he is bound to pay, and violates the grand fundamental principle on which his office and authority are erected. And is this a small matter, or trifling concern ?—to enforce the Divine honour and

glory throughout every department of the realm? Is this a thing to be done by fits and starts; or left to the fickle wishes and capricious inclinations of subordinate inferiors, or the unholy multitude? Does it not require every energy to be put forth, and every power to be called into exercise? What a torrent of counteracting opinions, of stern prejudices, and unsound principles, must be stemmed! What hosts of adversaries must be encountered! What constant need of diligence, firmness, perseverance, zeal! And who is sufficient for these things? Not man; but God. Oh! then, let all such, as well as all others, look to Him for help, and put their trust in him, and they shall not be confounded.*

2. How obvious is the connexion between the church and state!

An established religion, nationally considered, is nothing more than that "form of godliness," according to God's revealed will, which is selected, supported, and maintained by the state, for the general benefit. And will not this unavoidably follow from the head or ruler of that state putting into practical operation the grand

* See Psalm xx. and xxi.

principle which is here inculcated? How is it possible but that, if a man rule in the fear of God, he must inculcate and enforce that fear with all his influence and authority? And if he take God's revealed will, in its whole provision and detail, for his guide, will not that religion, so established and enforced, be the most agreeable to the Divine records, and approach the nearest to the Divine standard? And can we doubt for a moment what the nature of that religion will be, or what specific form it will assume, if the word of God be taken as the sole guide and direction in every particular? Does any system of false religion take that word, in all respects, for its authority, or measure all its provisions according to that unerring standard? Evidently not. Then what will be the character or denomination of that religion which any prince, or ruler, or people, will necessarily adopt and maintain, to whom God's whole revealed will is their only hope and guide in all things? Can we hesitate in the answer to be given? Notwithstanding the sneering scoffs and taunting insults of the disaffected and profane, we do not scruple clearly to assert, that religion will be the CHRISTIAN, and that its peculiar and essential form will be PROTESTANT. If

asked why? we answer,—Because there is none other that is based upon that Divine revelation; there is none other that takes the whole of that word for its guide and faith in all respects; and, therefore, as that individual, so also that prince or government, must be both Christian and protestant, which takes God's word for the only authority, and acts upon the known obligation of promoting its extension and influence among men. Should it be said, “But would it not be better to leave men to their own choice, to act as they like in this respect; to have any religion they please, or no religion at all?” We reply that cannot be the case where the obligation here enforced is admitted and maintained. Can any godly parent or master, for instance, whatever may be the wishes of his wicked children or servants, forego the obligation of maintaining the worship and fear of God in his family? True, he may say, “I cannot force your consciences; but I will take care to exert my authority, and discharge my duty. Whether you like to join with me or not, I will see that you may not have to say, we never had an opportunity of worshipping God; and therefore, if you perish, I am free from your blood, and your

ruin shall lie at your own door." Now, what is a family but a little kingdom? Transfer, then, the idea to the prince, the ruler, the state; and the conclusion is just the same. Whether men will conform to a religion thus established and maintained, or not, that is their concern; they must answer for that. The duty of the prince, or state, is clear: he is to take care that no man within the precincts of his dominions may ever want the opportunity of serving God according to his revealed will. This principle he must act upon; this resolution he must maintain. He forces no man's conscience; but he must maintain the imperious obligation of promoting the Divine honour and glory throughout all orders of the realm. How thankful, then, ought we to be for the inestimable privileges we possess; and how diligently should we improve them for the good of our souls, and for the glory of God!

3. How great is the guilt of ungodly princes and rulers, and how earnestly should we pray for them that God may bless and direct them in all his ways!

Sin lies at the door of a wicked ruler, or prince, as well as upon the soul of the vulgar

and mean. Guilt cries aloud for condemnation upon the one as well as upon the other. There is no respect of persons with God. Is not, then, the condition of wicked princes and rulers most awful in the extreme? The guilt which they contract is of no common sort. The condemnation to which they are exposed is of no ordinary kind. It is the violation of the most responsible trust, and the most binding obligation, under which any man may be placed. They have not only their own souls to attend to, but they have to exert their authority for the welfare of thousands and millions of others. And if thousands and millions perish in their sins, and go down into hell through their negligence or default, oh! how tremendous will be the burden of God's wrath which will light upon their heads! Are not all, then, bound to pray for them? Should we not pray that God would teach and direct, bless and save them? Should we not pray that the Lord would be pleased so to rule their hearts by his grace, that they may govern their people in his fear, and with an eye to his glory? And should we not all pray that they, as well as ourselves, may be led to the Redeemer's blood for pardon and peace; and, tasting that the

330 RULERS ARE BOUND TO PROMOTE, ETC.

**Lord is gracious, live to his honour and praise ?
May the Lord bless them, and bless us all with
the spirit of prayer, the riches of his grace, and
the power and mercies of his salvation !**

**“ Blest country, where these kingly virtues shine ;
Blest England, if this happiness be thine !”**

COWPER.

APPENDIX.

The following PRAYERS, taken from the Service appointed for the celebration of her Majesty's Accession to the Throne, are subjoined, as an appropriate conclusion to the foregoing discourses.

PRAYER I.

Thanksgiving for her Majesty's Accession to the Throne.

Almighty God, who rulest over all the kingdoms of the world, and disposest of them according to thy good pleasure; we yield thee unfeigned thanks, for that thou wast pleased, as on this day, to place thy servant our sovereign lady, Queen Victoria, upon the throne of this realm. Let thy wisdom be her guide, and let thine arm strengthen her; let justice, truth, and holiness, let peace and love, and all those virtues that adorn the Christian profession, flourish in her days; direct all her counsels and endeavours to thy

glory, and the welfare of her people ; and give us grace to obey her cheerfully and willingly for conscience sake ; that neither our sinful passions, nor our private interests, may disappoint her cares for the public good ; let her always possess the hearts of her people, that they may never be wanting in honour to her person, and dutiful submission to her authority ; let her reign be long and prosperous, and crown her with immortality in the life to come ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER II.

For God's Protection of the Queen against all her Enemies.

Most gracious God; who hast set thy servant Victoria our Queen upon the throne of her ancestors, we most humbly beseech thee to protect her on the same from all the dangers to which she may be exposed ; hide her from the gathering together of the froward, and from the insurrection of wicked doers ; do thou weaken the hands, blast the designs, and defeat the enterprizes of all her enemies, that no secret conspiracies, nor open violences, may disquiet her reign ; but that, being safely kept under the shadow of thy wing, and supported by thy power, she may triumph over all opposition ; that so the world may acknowledge thee to be her defender and mighty deliverer in all difficulties and adversities ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER III.

For the Queen as the supreme Governor of this Church.

Blessed Lord, who hast called Christian princes to the defence of thy faith, and hast made it their duty to promote the spiritual welfare, together with the temporal interest of their people; we acknowledge with humble and thankful hearts thy great goodness to us, in setting thy servant our most gracious Queen over this church and nation; give her, we beseech thee, all those heavenly graces that are requisite for so high a trust; let the work of thee her God prosper in her hands; let her eyes behold the success of her designs for the service of thy true religion established amongst us; and make her a blessed instrument of protecting and advancing thy truth, wherever it is persecuted and oppressed; let hypocrisy and profaneness, superstition and idolatry, fly before her face; let not heresies and false doctrines disturb the peace of the church, nor schisms and causeless divisions weaken it; but grant us to be of one heart and one mind in serving thee our God, and obeying her according to thy will; and that these blessings may be continued to after-ages, let there never be one wanting in her house to succeed her in the government of this United Kingdom, that our posterity may see her children's children, and peace upon Israel. So we that are thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, shall give thee thanks for ever, and will always be shewing forth thy praise from generation to generation. Amen.

PRAYER IV.

For Unity.

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that, as there is but one body, and one spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER V.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



